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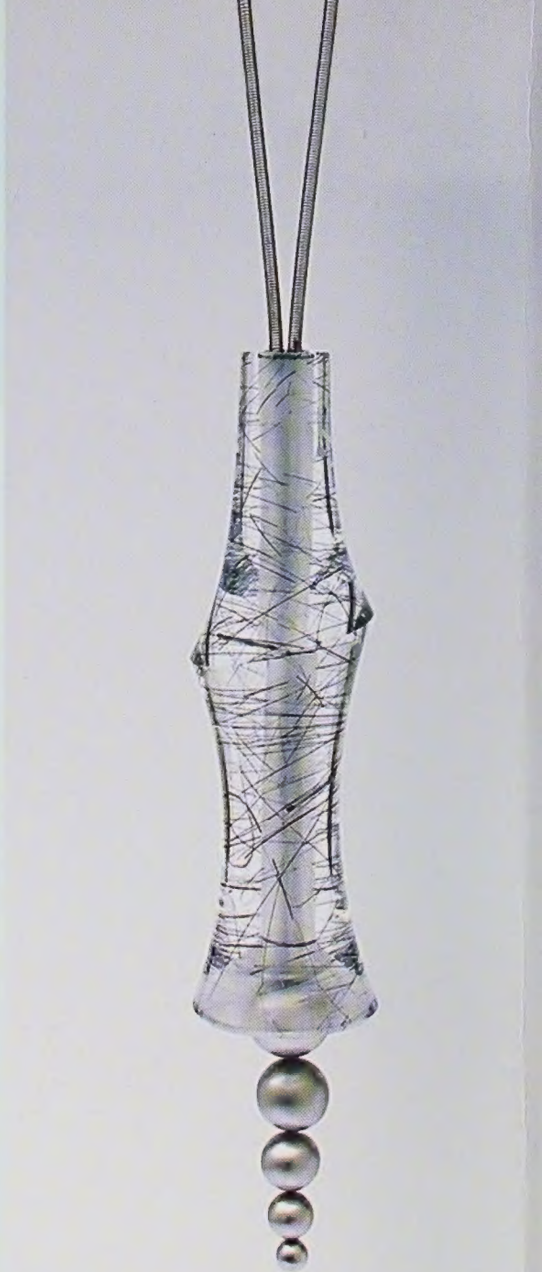

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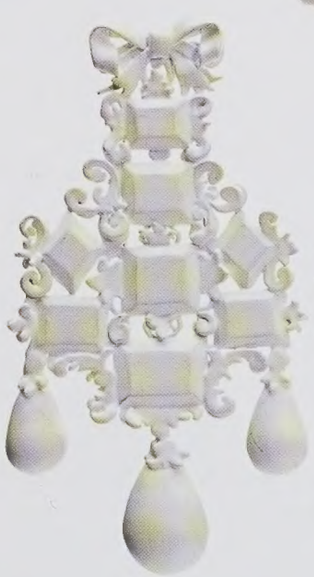

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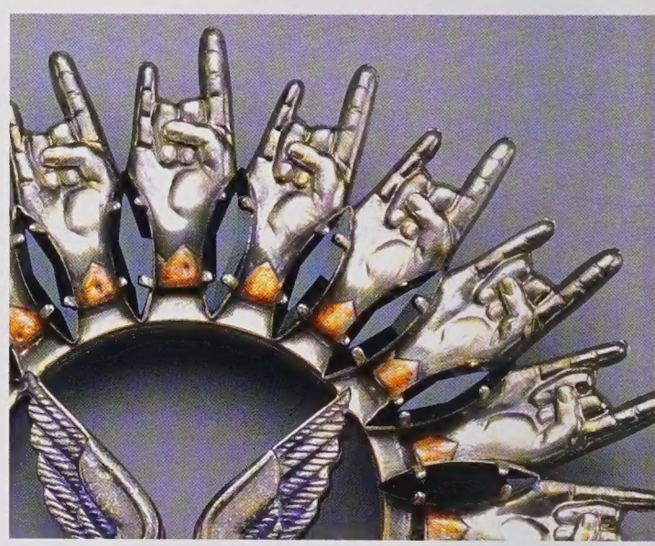

cover
PIERRE CAVALAN
Lost in the Crowd II, 2007
metal
40 1/2 x 26 x 1 1/2"
Collection Powerhouse Museum, Sydney
Photo: Jean-Francois Lanzarone

from top
IRIS EICHENBERG
Untitled (necklace), from Reitveld Academy graduation show, 1994 (detail)

ALEXANDER CALDER
I Brooch, 1948 (detail)

PIERRE CAVALAN
Fin de Siècle Chronicle Brooches, 1995 (detail)

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FROM THE EDITOR

SUZANNE RAMLJAK

This issue of *Metalsmith* is a transitional one. It is the final issue to sport the current format; in January 2009 you'll be greeted by a freshly designed magazine (see page 50). It also comes on the heels of our controversial *Exhibition in Print* (EiP), which was published in August. Standing at this crossroads, with the dust of debate still aloft, we might ponder some of the ideas stirred up in the fray.

Our 2008 EiP, titled "Equilibrium," was curated by Rachelle Thiewes and Kate Bonansinga, and focused on the sensory impact of wearable works that extend the body's boundaries. Certain readers objected that pieces were poorly made, with little metal content, and were an affront to tradition. Proponents valued the more open-ended definition of metalsmithing embodied in the selection. Coincidentally, feature stories in this latest issue—on Iris Eichenberg and Alexander Calder—speak to this very division, reminding us that there is no clear "right" or "wrong" in art and metalsmithing. More often it is a question of which forms best energize a given age.

Lisa Gralnick's essay on Eichenberg underscores the link between historical context and artistic reception. While theorist Walter Benjamin prescribed photography and film as the preferred media in the 1940s, Gralnick offers a different antidote for today: "In an era when the arts seem to actively participate in the anesthetizing phantasmagoria of commodification.... it is an appropriate time for an art that is reactionary, urgent, and sensual." Witness Eichenberg's seemingly casual work, which she says revels in an "obvious disdain for the authoritarian propaganda of the craft agenda." As head of the metals department at the prestigious Cranbrook Academy of Art, Eichenberg's approach will no doubt impact the future of the field.

Likewise Alexander Calder, who proved to be one of the most influential artists in the 20th century, according to historian Toni Greenbaum, did so despite an aesthetic that was technically unkempt. His work was similarly unfinished, and he valued sensual impact over formal polish. Admiring ancient and tribal metalwork, Calder wrote, "Somehow the primitive is usually much stronger than art in which technique and flourish abound." Accordingly, Calder often included planish marks in his designs, and used various raw connecting methods such as twisting, wrapping, or riveting to create his compelling jewelry.

The examples of Eichenberg and Calder are especially germane to the recent *Exhibition in Print*. As Gralnick suggests, truly aesthetic art should defy any *anesthetic* forces that may numb our sensibilities. While there is value and satisfaction in technical acumen, it does not insure historic significance and rarely serves as a tonic for the human organism. And while one can argue about skill levels, it is hard to quarrel with art that invigorates and refreshes a culture....

METALSMITH

a publication of SNAG, the premier organization for jewelers, designers, and metalsmiths

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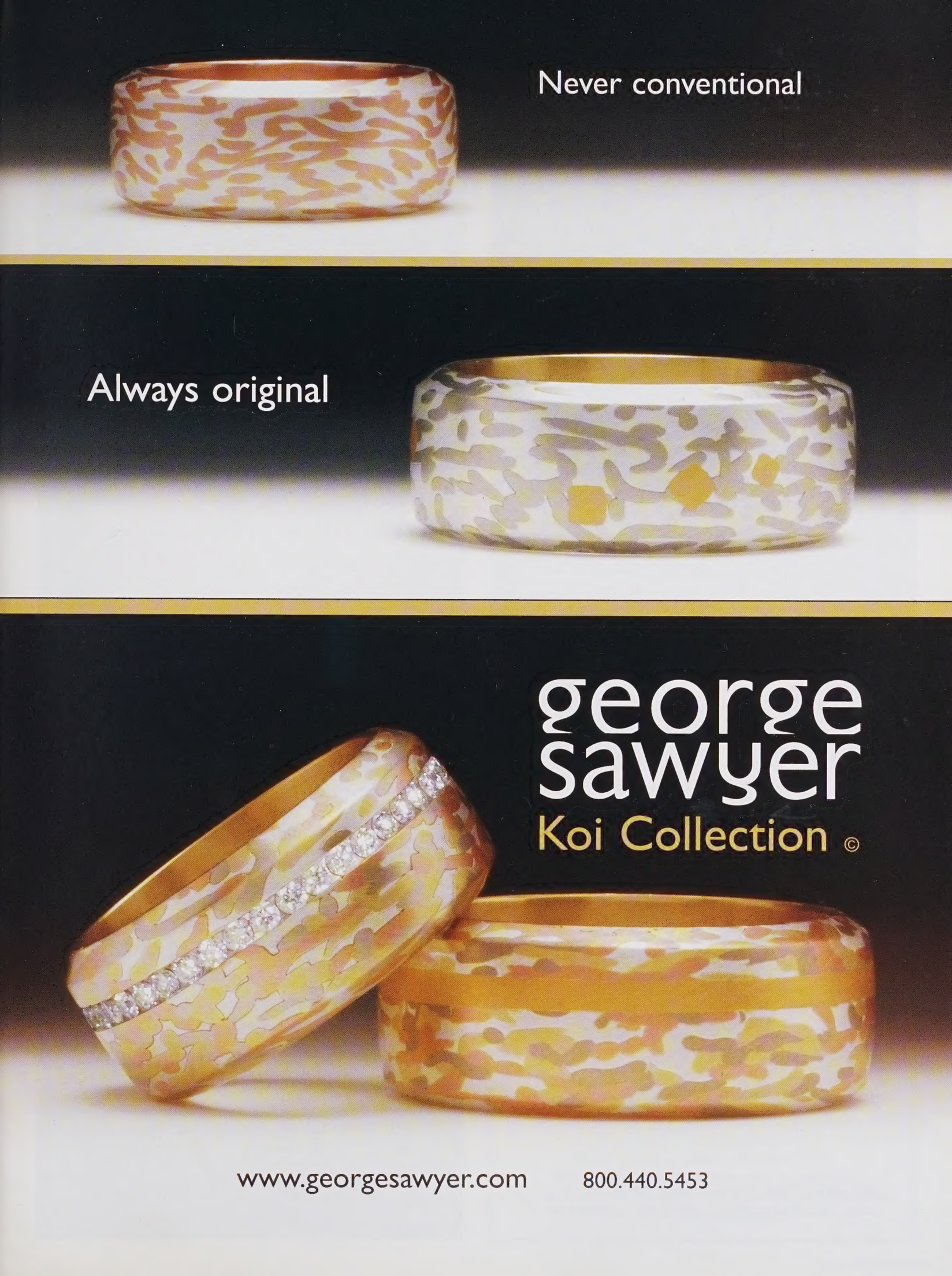
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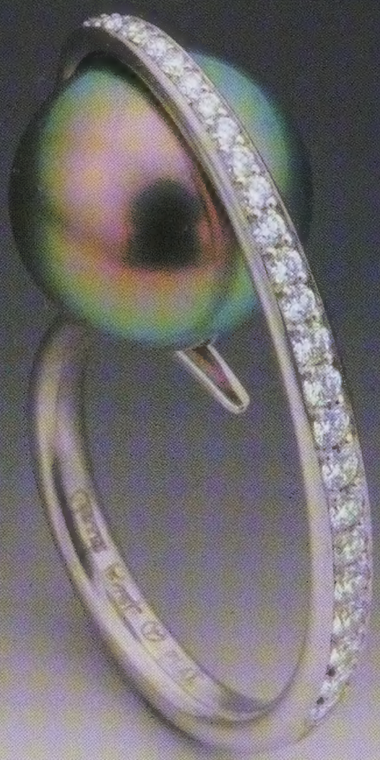

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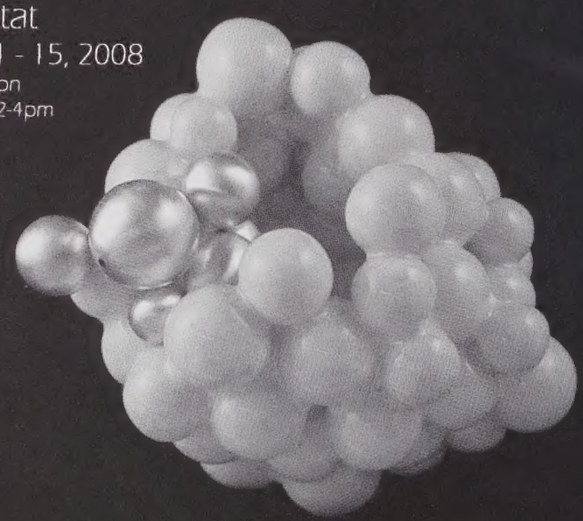

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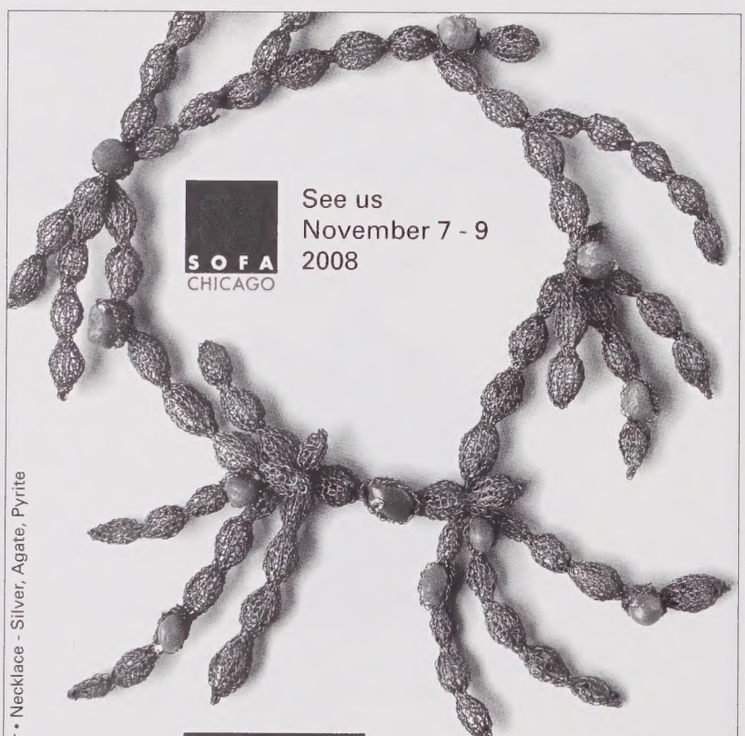

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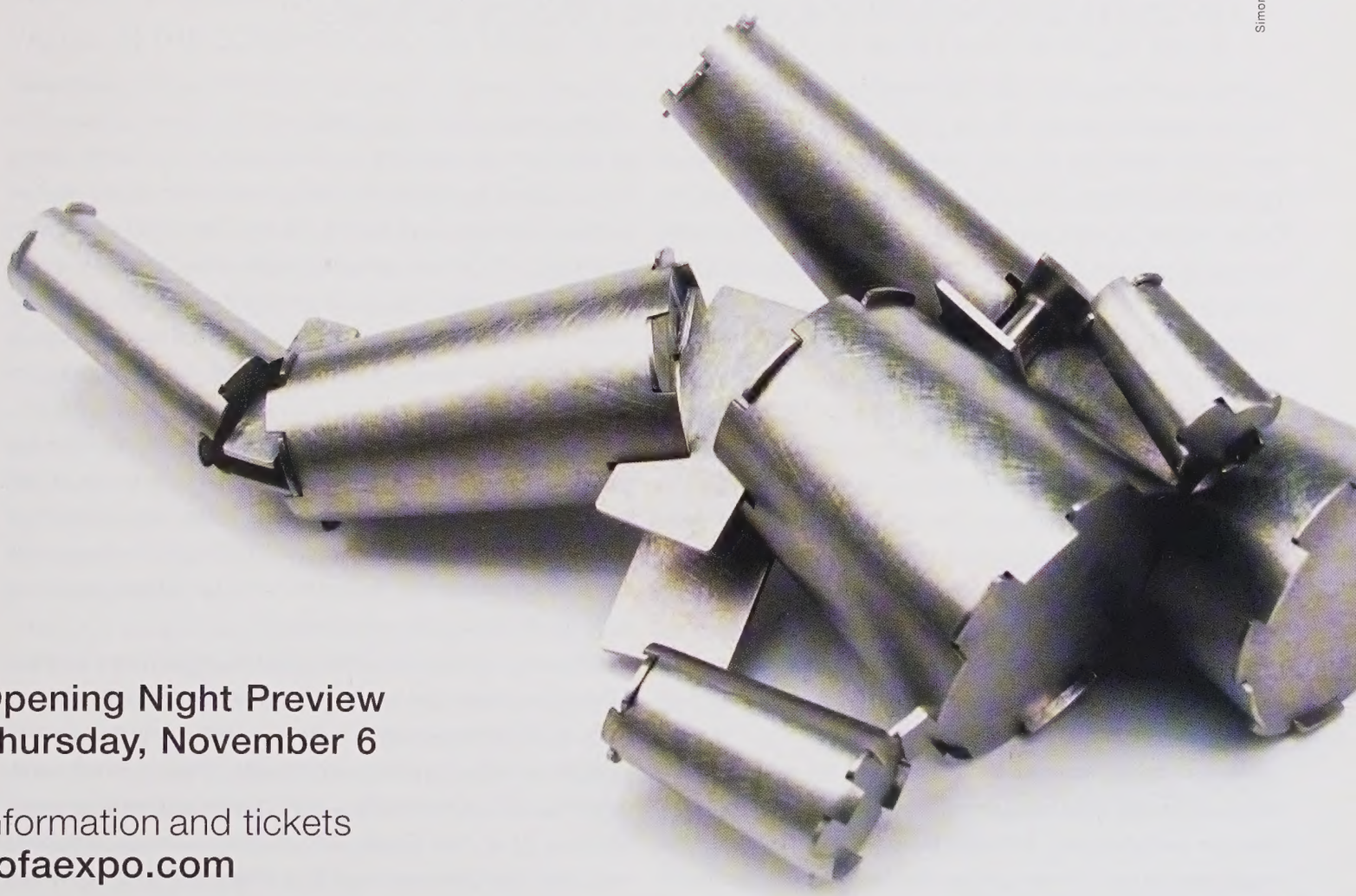

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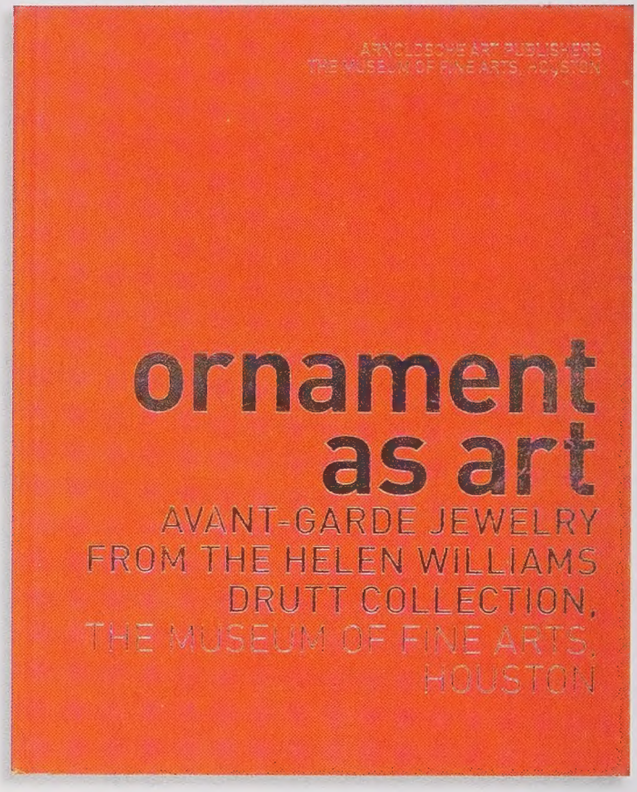


ORNAMENT AS ART: Avant-Garde Jewelry from the Helen Williams Drutt Collection
by CINDI STRAUSS
THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON, AND ARNOLDSCHE ART PUBLISHERS, STUTTGART, GERMANY, 2007

by MARJORIE SIMON

"...THE COLLECTOR'S PASSION BORDERS ON THE CHAOS OF MEMORIES." [1]

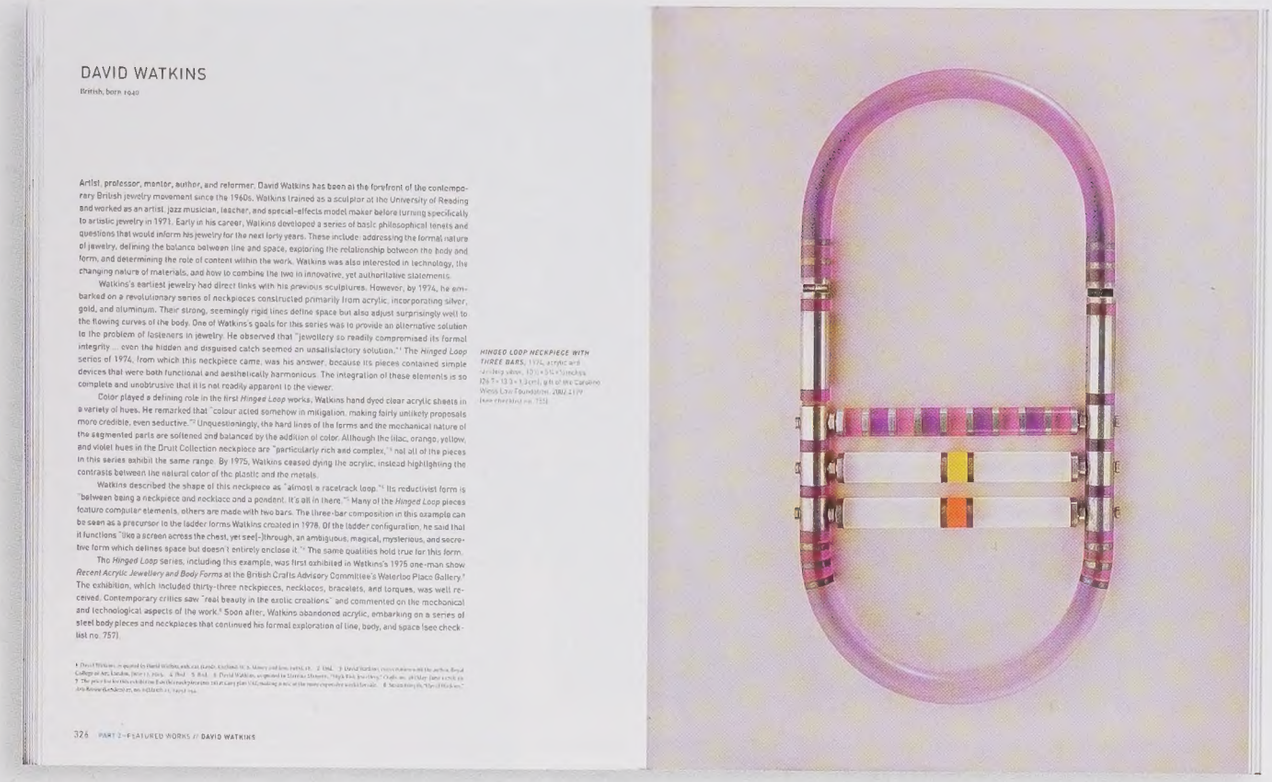
The act of collecting activates and consolidates memory. In 1931 Walter Benjamin wrote of the frisson of anticipation he experienced unpacking his book collection. He recalled acquiring the cherished volumes, the cities where he found them, and the rooms he lived in while reading them. By describing the visceral pleasure of memory, rather than the lust of acquisition, Benjamin inadvertently normalized what has sometimes been characterized as pathological—the impulse to collect. Similarly, Helen Williams Drutt couldn't have known what she was instigating when she bought an electroformed silver brooch from artist Stanley Lechtzin in 1967. "I couldn't sleep!" she says, after seeing it. Later, as a gallery owner, she supported the triad of artist, gallery, collector, and believed it her duty to support her artists by buying their work.

In *Ornament as Art*, a doorstopper of a book documenting Drutt's collection of more than 700 pieces of jewelry now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, curator Cindi Strauss touches on a number of overlapping themes: Thing theory; the nature of collecting and the world of the collector; the history of art jewelry in the last half-century; and the notion of ornament in reference to the human body.[2] The title is ultimately misleading, however, because ornament has always been art. Perhaps *adornment* would have been more precise, to suggest that "mere" decoration can be Art itself. Or maybe, to suggest that, after modernism, embellishment is back. (I'm being deliberately cranky. It's clear that the title means "art to wear," that jewelry has value "beyond ornament." But it's been a long time since jewelry was "only decoration.")

Strauss's excellent essay on minimalism and conceptualism contextualizes the jewelry of the 1960s and '70s in contemporaneous Fine Art movements, as exemplified by Donald Judd and Sol LeWitt, among others. Strauss establishes the roots of minimalism in the work of Giampaolo Babbetto, David Watkins, and even Gary Griffin's Watkins-ish collar from 1976. Though seemingly related through the geometry of design, Strauss shows how the "Dutch Smooth" design of Emmy van Leersum and Gijs Bakker, its most notable practitioners, "produced a group of objects that, while minimal in style, emerged ideologically from the antithesis of American minimalism."

Yet once again, the road from Art to Craft is shown to be a one-way street. Is jewelry still to be legitimated by showing its kinship to Art? Strauss notes that Giampaolo Babbetto's geometric forms were "most evocative of [Donald] Judd's sculptures....The fact that they were made from precious materials and required the hand of a craftsman would have negated them ideologically in Judd's eyes."

Drutt's personal chronology brings to light her refusal to enter Germany in the postwar decade, and then her growing acceptance of and by German artists, led by Hermann Jünger. The reader is introduced to the collector's world: the networks, the passion, and the artists. The work isn't all equally compelling, but then the collector is under no obligation to be evenhanded. There's a lot of Max Frohlich and Elizabeth Garrison, both often overlooked. I wish there were more of Liv Blavarp and less of, say, William Harper. Why call attention to three pieces by Betsy King and none by Dan Jocz, or only one each by Otto Kunzli or Daniel Kruger? The visual unity



DAVID WATKINS

British, born 1940

Artist, professor, mentor, author, and reformer, David Watkins has been at the forefront of the contemporary British jewelry movement since the 1960s. Watkins trained as a sculptor at the University of Reading and worked as an artist, jazz musician, teacher, and special-effects model maker before turning specifically to artistic jewelry in 1971. Early in his career, Watkins developed a series of basic philosophical tenets and questions that would inform his jewelry for the next forty years. These include: addressing the formal nature of jewelry, defining the balance between line and space, exploring the relationship between the body and form, and determining the role of content within the work. Watkins was also interested in technology, the changing nature of materials, and how to combine the two in innovative, yet authoritative statements.

Watkins's earliest jewelry had direct links with his previous sculptures. However, by 1974, he embarked on a revolutionary series of neckpieces constructed primarily from acrylic, incorporating silver, gold, and aluminum. Their strong, seemingly rigid lines define space but also adjust surprisingly well to the flowing curves of the body. One of Watkins's goals for this series was to provide an alternative solution to the problem of fasteners in jewelry. He observed that "jewellery so readily compromised its formal integrity ... even the hidden and disguised catch seemed an unsatisfactory solution."[1] The *Hinged Loop* series of 1974, from which this neckpiece came, was his answer. Because its pieces contained simple devices that were both functional and aesthetically harmonious. The integration of these elements is so complete and unobtrusive that it is not readily apparent to the viewer.

Color played a defining role in the first *Hinged Loop* works. Watkins hand dyed clear acrylic sheets in a variety of hues. He remarked that "colour acted somehow in mitigation, making fairly unlikely proposals more credible, even seductive."[2] Unquestioningly, the hard lines of the forms and the mechanical nature of the segmented parts are softened and balanced by the addition of color. Although the lilac, orange, yellow, and violet hues in the Drutt Collection neckpiece are "particularly rich and complex,"[3] not all of the pieces in this series exhibit the same range. By 1975, Watkins ceased dying the acrylic, instead highlighting the contrasts between the natural color of the plastic and the metals.

Watkins described the shape of this neckpiece as "almost a racetrack loop."[4] Its reductivist form is "between being a neckpiece and necklace and a pendant. It's all in there."[5] Many of the *Hinged Loop* pieces feature computer elements, others are made with two bars. The three-bar composition in this example can be seen as a precursor to the ladder forms Watkins created in 1978. Of the ladder configuration, he said that it functions "like a screen across the chest, yet see[-]through, an ambiguous, magical, mysterious, and secretive form which defines space but doesn't entirely enclose it."[6] The same qualities hold true for this form.

The *Hinged Loop* series, including this example, was first exhibited in Watkins's 1975 one-man show *Recent Acrylic Jewellery and Body-Forms* at the British Crafts Advisory Committee's Waterloo Place Gallery.[7] The exhibition, which included thirty-three neckpieces, necklaces, bracelets, and torques, was well received. Contemporary critics saw "real beauty in the erotic creations" and commented on the mechanical and technological aspects of the work.[8] Soon after, Watkins abandoned acrylic, embarking on a series of steel body pieces and neckpieces that continued his formal exploration of line, body, and space (see checklist no. 757).

HINGED LOOP NECKPIECE WITH THREE BARS, 1974, acrylic and anodized silver, 10 1/2 × 5 1/4 × 1 inches (26.7 × 13.3 × 1.3 cm), gift of the Caroline Wiess Law Foundation, 2002.4.179 (see checklist no. 755)

1 David Watkins, as quoted in David Watkins, exh. cat. (London: Electrum Gl. A. Money and Sons Limited, n.d.), 2. Ibid. 3 David Watkins, interview with the author, Royal College of Art, London, June 13, 2005. 4 Ibid. 5 Ibid. 6 David Watkins, as quoted in Thomas Stevens, "High Fashion Jewellery," *Crafts*, no. 28 (May–June 1976), 19. 7 The precise location of the Earth Mound pieces, 10 of a total of 100 making a set, is the most expensive work in the set. 8 See, for example, "Objects," *The Observer*, London, Gerhardt, no. 6 (March 21, 1976), 19.

STRAUSS'S THOROUGH RESEARCH CONTRIBUTES AS MUCH AS THE IMAGES TO THE BOOK'S VALUE, IN THE CONNECTIONS SHE MAKES IN AND OUT OF THE IMMEDIATE JEWELRY FIELD.

created among the pages by the gray backgrounds unintentionally flattens the images and reveals the major disadvantage of a book over an object: the loss of scale. For one, Sharon Church's *Envy* loses momentum without the human body. On the other hand, although the vivid dimensionality of Claus Bury's tableaux is also lost, his multi-layered deconstruction of a brooch is fully documented here for the first time. But my biggest (and pickiest) complaint is reserved for the suede cover that immediately becomes damaged when handled.

That said, Strauss's substantive commentary on the 100 featured artists is lucid, free of jargon, and backed by documented scholarship. The work is located within the history of jewelry and dominant art movements of its time. Material choices are identified; work that's opaque, such as Manfred Bischoff's, is explained. Strauss's thorough research contributes as much as the images to the book's value, in the connections she makes in and out of the immediate jewelry field.

Best of all, taking the long view facilitates revisiting early work of artists who are still producing and evolving, such as the prolific Bruce Metcalf, as well as artists who later found more expressive media, such as Gary Griffin and Albert Paley. It enables the reader to trace the evolution of Bruno Martinazzi's "eye" over a quarter of a century and to see both the Calvinist "Dutch Smooth" (Bakker and Van Leersum) and the humanist Dutch (Lam de Wolf). Materials and processes thought of as new turn out to have a history, such as Robin Quigley's use of epoxy resin in the 1970s. Especially welcome are the drawings of Bruce Metcalf, Hermann Junger, Carlier Makigawa, Manfred Bischoff, Bruno Martinazzi, and Peter Chang. Kinships emerge: the corrugated gold construction of Francisco Pavan in 1985 presages the postmodern real corrugated cardboard brooches of Ogura Ritsuko. *Burning Building Brooch* by Carlier Makigawa, 1989, reminded me of Bruce Metcalf, and a wooden brooch by Thomas Gentille from the late 1970s resembled a black acrylic one by Lisa Gralnick a decade later. It was a pleasure to see the quintessentially American narrative jewelry of Metcalf, Harper, Laurie Hall, and Nancy Worden contrasting nicely with the minimalist and conceptual work of western Europe, from the Neolithic beauty of Breon O'Casey to the refined geometry of Giampaolo Babbetto. In that vein I also liked the distinction made between the narrative of Kranitsky and Overstreet and that of Ramona Solberg or J. Fred Woell.

In her own essay, Drutt presents a window into the unique perspective of the collector, and how the community of contemporary jewelry collectors grew. Little by little, documenting each milestone, she enlarged her view, and she has enlarged ours. Helen Drutt represents a generous embodiment of the collector's impulse—not to hoard or cling to the past, but to engage the living in the service of beauty.

MARJORIE SIMON is a metalsmith and writer residing in Philadelphia.

1 *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Walter Benjamin, Schocken Paperback, 1969, p.60.
2 The reader is directed to *Things*, edited by Bill Brown, and *On Longing*, by Susan Stewart. Benjamin started it all by stating that "ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects." (*Illuminations*, op cit., p. 67)

ELIZABETH BRIM

by KATEY SCHULTZ

If there ever were the equivalent of a Grand Central Station in the heart of Appalachia, it would have to be Elizabeth Brim's blacksmithing studio in Penland, North Carolina. Just across the road from the old post office, along the North Toe River, a steep gravel drive cuts uphill and loops around to Brim's studio. Friends like to say that if there aren't at least a few folks coming and going at any given time, something must be awry. This is partly attributed to Brim's long history with the neighboring Penland School of Crafts. But mainly it's the artist's unabashed affinity for fun, community, and hard work that brings people together.

Time seems to fold back onto itself at Brim's studio. The space feels at once historical and cutting edge. From the driveway, a row of steps fashioned from manhole covers cuts through a flower garden and leads to the smithy. Brim salvaged a majority of the makeshift steps from the scrap yard but, like most things on her property, some of them have a story. Beyond dense dahlias, peonies, and irises is Brim's studio, the exterior clad in her hubcap collection. "Shade 45," rap artist Eminem's satellite radio show, blares from the studio entrance and, as if that weren't colorful enough, Brim herself peeks around the doorway wearing her signature overalls and pearl necklace. "Well hey! Come on in!" she shouts above the music.

The occasion for this studio visit is to learn more about Brim's latest breakthroughs in public art, on which she has been focusing since 2006. "Lots of people think the work I did was real feminist work," says Brim, "but I just think whatever I'm doing needs to be a whole lot of fun. Like the bench for Morgan Park—it's wearing a skirt with a bustle! How serious can that be? I inflated the seat and the back to make it look more authentic. The truth is, now one side of it is a lot more comfortable to sit on than the other. I decided that, to me, the way it looks is more important than how comfortable it is to sit in."

The Morgan Park Bench, to be installed in Spartanburg, South Carolina, later this year, is forged from sheet steel and flat bar with structural steel on the interior. The back and seat appear "pillowy" and a gathered skirt trims the base of the four-foot-long bench, which is finished with epoxy paint.

"I really like doing work that means something to people in a community," Brim states. "Spartanburg is a textiles town, and the fact that the bench looks like cloth is really relevant. When the commission for the bench came along, I had just finished this beautiful chandelier for a second home. The owners will really enjoy it, but pretty much nobody else will get to see it. I felt inspired to do the bench because I knew so many people would get to enjoy it and respond to it. Over time, people will come back to visit the bench and interact with it, and I like that."

Last spring, Brim completed another public art commission, a 13-foot-tall sculpture of a serviceberry tree for the town of Spruce Pine, North Carolina. Fellow blacksmith Jeff McDowell assisted her with the structural engineering. "That tree took well over a year to make, and during that time we had some serious fires in downtown Spruce Pine," says Brim. "That's when I really got emotionally invested in the project." Historically, the serviceberry tree has served as a symbol of rebirth and hope. It is one of the first trees to bloom in springtime, an indication that the ground had warmed and preachers could resume outdoor services; hence, its name.

The tree sculpture has hundreds of 14 gauge steel flowers cut by a computerized plasma cutter and formed and painted by people in the community. The trunk's internal structure consists of 3- to 8-inch rings around a main support, all covered with welded steel plates. "The welds left on there are important to me, because people who are metal workers can go up to it and understand how it was made, and people who don't work with metal can at least guess," she says.

It's worth noting the use of fire to forge a steel sculpture that symbolizes hope for a town devastated by flames. One of Brim's next commissions, which she calls "The Veterinary Vine," will adorn the entrance to the new home of the community veterinarian; her previous home burned to the ground three years ago in an electrical fire. "The reason I like blacksmithing so much is you can take something that others would throw away and, with your skills and your vision, you can turn it into something people find desirable and valuable," Brim explains. "It's interesting to me to be doing this commemorative work around the idea of fire because it has destroyed so much, but it's what we use to make things, too."

"I REALLY LIKE DOING WORK THAT MEANS SOMETHING TO PEOPLE IN A COMMUNITY."

opposite
Artist Elizabeth Brim at work on a public art commission at her studio in Penland, North Carolina.
Photo: Robin Dreyer

clockwise from top left
One of Brim's recent commissions is this 13-foot-tall sculpture of a serviceberry tree for Spruce Pine, North Carolina
Photo: Robin Dreyer

Interior of Elizabeth Brim's blacksmithing studio
Photo: Katey Schultz

A bustled bench by Brim awaits its permanent public home in Spartanburg, South Carolina.
Photo: Katey Schultz

Brim's imagination is balanced externally by the spontaneous environment of her studio. While Brim describes the gatherings and visits from area artists as a blessing, it's diving headlong into a project that makes her happiest. "I think my work is probably what saves me because I can lose myself in it," Brim says. "That's why I like projects that are very tedious and take a long time."

As for the rap music, a longstanding fascination for Brim, playing it while she works is quite intentional. "I'm a very sensitive, nostalgic person," she reasons. "The music I play is gruff and mean and crude and I think that it kind of balances me out. I'm so sentimental that a good friend of mine once put her foot down and said, 'Elizabeth, you just feel things too hard.'" Based on her recent projects, it's safe to say Brim works as hard as she feels.

KATEY SCHULTZ, a writer based in Fork Mountain, North Carolina, is currently working on a series of essays on art and about adolescence.

"PROSUMER" JEWELRY

by SUZANNE RAMLJAK

Although the DIY (Do it Yourself) movement is widely billed as a hot new cultural trend, the tendency is as old as civilization itself. Throughout most of history, people did *do* things themselves, rather than procuring the goods and labors of others. While there was specialization and bartering, everyone was a producer and culture was a hands-on affair. And artists have always been do-it-yourselfers; a DIY artist is a redundancy. It is the formerly unhandy folks that the DIY trend has now catalyzed. In the wake of this development, a number of studio jewelers are seeking to bridge the gap between their own sophisticated artistic practice and these newly converted doers.

In current marketing parlance, this conjunction could be labeled a type of "prosumerism," a cross between producer and consumer behaviors. The projects and kits offered by jewelry artists such as Thomas Mann, Sarah Kate Burgess, Benjamin Lignel, and Arthur Hash knowingly enlist buyers in the act of creation, allowing for customization of their purchased goods. Shoppers are invited into the workshop with these new creative hybrids.

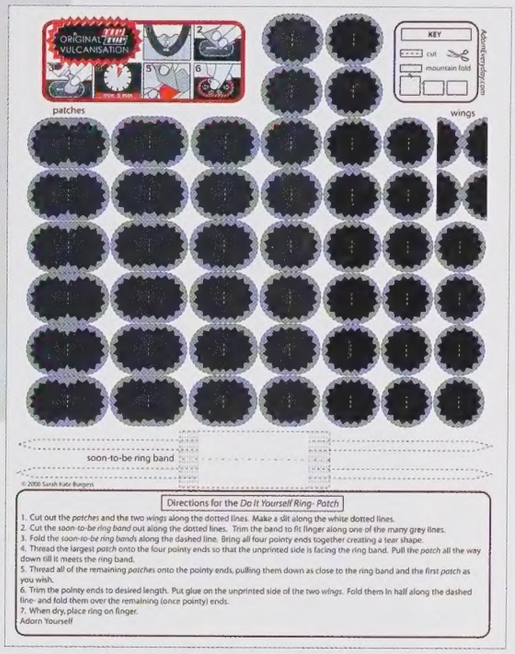
Within an art historical context, this practice can be seen as an extension of Marcel Duchamp's mandate that viewers complete the work of art. His various conceptual strategies turned viewers into participants, requiring them to grapple with art objects. There is also precedent in Fluxus art of the 1950s and 1960s, which included "Fluxkits," boxed editions that contained everyday objects and printed materials for play and demonstration. Another antecedent is found in the *BOE (Bond van Oproenge Edelsmeden) Box* of 1974, an assemblage of jewelry elements and tools, by the Dutch artist group known in English as the Legion of Riotous Gold and Silversmiths. And a more contemporary Dutch example of participatory jewelry is Ted Noten's *Chew Your Own Brooch* (1998), a project that allows wearers to have their own masticated gum cast into metal brooches.

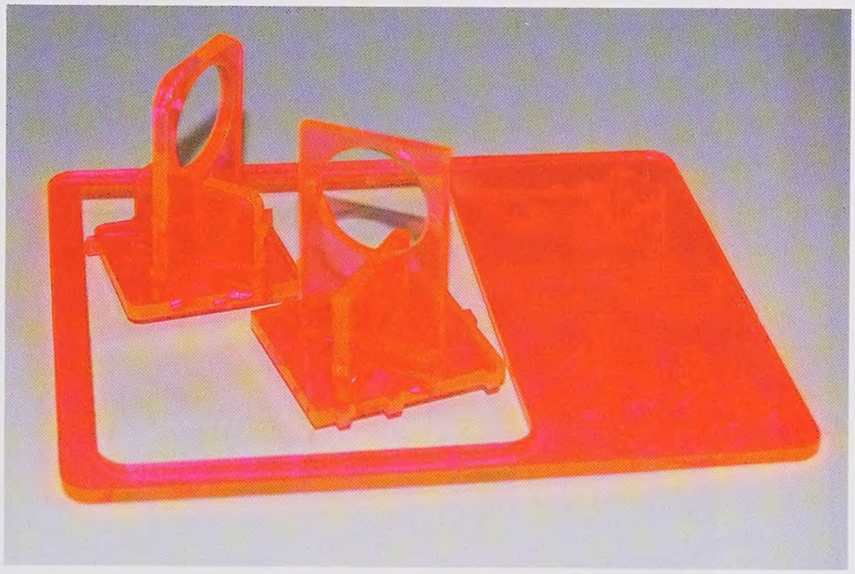
In keeping with these forerunners, the recent hands-on jewelry offerings are as much conceptual art as they are how-to projects. These artist-initiated kits encourage the maker (prosumer) to contemplate their constructions. It's not just about doing, but about thinking as well.

Prominent jeweler Thomas Mann developed his "Studio Flux" line as a means of bringing "metalsmithing to the masses," in his words. The brand's name recalls the Fluxus movement, and Mann's packaged sets are akin to the earlier group's boxed editions. Mann's DIY jewelry projects span beginner to advanced skill levels and include the "Container to Wear" and "Photo Assemblage Brooch." These populist art kits, which encourage "personal wearable expressions," will be presented at the 2009 Craft & Hobby Association Convention in hopes of tapping into that industry's $30 billion in annual sales.

Sarah Kate Burgess seeks to foreground jewelry's implicit collaboration between wearer and maker. She presents her hands-on jewelry projects along with other works under the website banner adorneveryday.com. She offers a line of "Do it Yourself Rings," which can be created by downloading and printing ring patterns onto the material of your choice and then constructing the wearable creation. "The preciousness of these rings will come from the experience of making them, and from your own hands," says Burgess. "I have designed the rings, and you, the viewer (soon also to be the maker and wearer), may construct the rings from paper."

The artist Benjamin Lignel offers less labor-intensive ring setups, although they are just as adaptable to personal use. His artfully packaged "Cheap Thrills" instant wedding rings are portable thin bands of real gold that can be bent into service at the spur of the moment. Arthur Hash has also produced a line of DIY jewelry for constructive consumers. His "Punch Out" ring sets come precut on a Plexiglas sheet. The components are snapped out and variously assembled to form two separate rings, while the


ORIGINAL VULCANISATION
KEY
cut
mountain fold
patches
wings
soon-to-be ring band
Directions for the Do It Yourself Ring- Patch
1. Cut out the patches and the two wings along the dotted lines. Make a slit along the white dotted lines.
2. Cut the soon-to-be ring band out along the dotted lines. Trim the band to fit finger along one of the many grey lines.
3. Fold the soon-to-be ring bands along the dashed line. Bring all four pointy ends together creating a tear shape.
4. Thread the largest patch onto the four pointy ends so that the unprinted side is facing the ring band. Pull the patch all the way down till it meets the ring band.
5. Thread all of the remaining patches onto the pointy ends, pulling them down as close to the ring band and the first patch as you wish.
6. Trim the pointy ends to desired length. Put glue on the unprinted side of the two wings. Fold them in half along the dashed line- and fold them over the remaining (once pointy) ends.
7. When dry, place ring on finger.
Adorn Yourself



THESE ARTISTS ARE HELPING TO PUT MORE CREATIVE POWER INTO THE HANDS OF PEOPLE, GETTING THEM INVOLVED IN MAKING, NOT JUST WEARING, JEWELRY.

remaining plastic becomes a wearable bracelet to complete the ensemble.

In each of these cases, artists establish the parameters, while consumers are given leeway to make creative choices and individualize their productions. The consumer and artist meet halfway. A similar desire drives the computer-generated creations of designer-metalsmith Richard Nelipovich. Harnessing his considerable skill at computer programming, Nelipovich is striving for "mass customization" in his production. "I am writing code to grow objects," he explains. "Utilizing mathematical structures that replicate variance in nature, along with the continuous changeability of computer-controlled manufacturing systems, every object produced has the potential to be an original." By enlisting industrial prototyping tools to make such unique objects, he hopes to realize a line of affordable yet highly personal products.

Whatever the means of production—be it screwdrivers or 3-D scanners—these artists are helping to put more creative power into the hands of people, getting them involved in making, not just wearing, jewelry. It is part of a broader shift toward greater viewer involvement and less consumer apathy. And, as Martha Stewart, that popular proponent of the handmade, would say: "It's a good thing."

SUZANNE RAMLJAK is editor of *Metalsmith*.

opposite
BENJAMIN LIGNEL
Instant Wedding Rings (2007), in gold from the "Cheap Thrills" series.

clockwise from top
SARAH KATE BURGESS
Patch Rings (2005-2008), in paper, constructed with downloadable pdf pattern, from the "Do it Yourself Rings" series.

ARTHUR HASH
Punch-Out Ring Set (2008), in laser cut Plexiglas.

THOMAS MANN
Container to Wear-Circle (2007), assembly parts for a DIY container pin (bolts, nuts, washers, precut acrylic discs and brass sheet, with instructions).

by CINDI STRAUSS

PIERRE CAVALAN

ACCIDENTAL TOURIST

By combining strategies of *assemblage* with witty and subversive culture commentary, Pierre Cavalan has gained widespread recognition for his distinctive jewelry. His work links body ornament with contrasting ideas of kitsch and majesty, all the while challenging the conventional aesthetics of jewelrymaking. Although the concept of *assemblage*—the practice of assembling/amassing non-artistic materials and found objects into three-dimensional structures—was widespread in the twentieth century, Cavalan's adoption of its principles into jewelry was revolutionary. By allowing his chosen materials to retain their individual identities despite artistic manipulation, Cavalan's works bridge the space between ornament, life, and art.

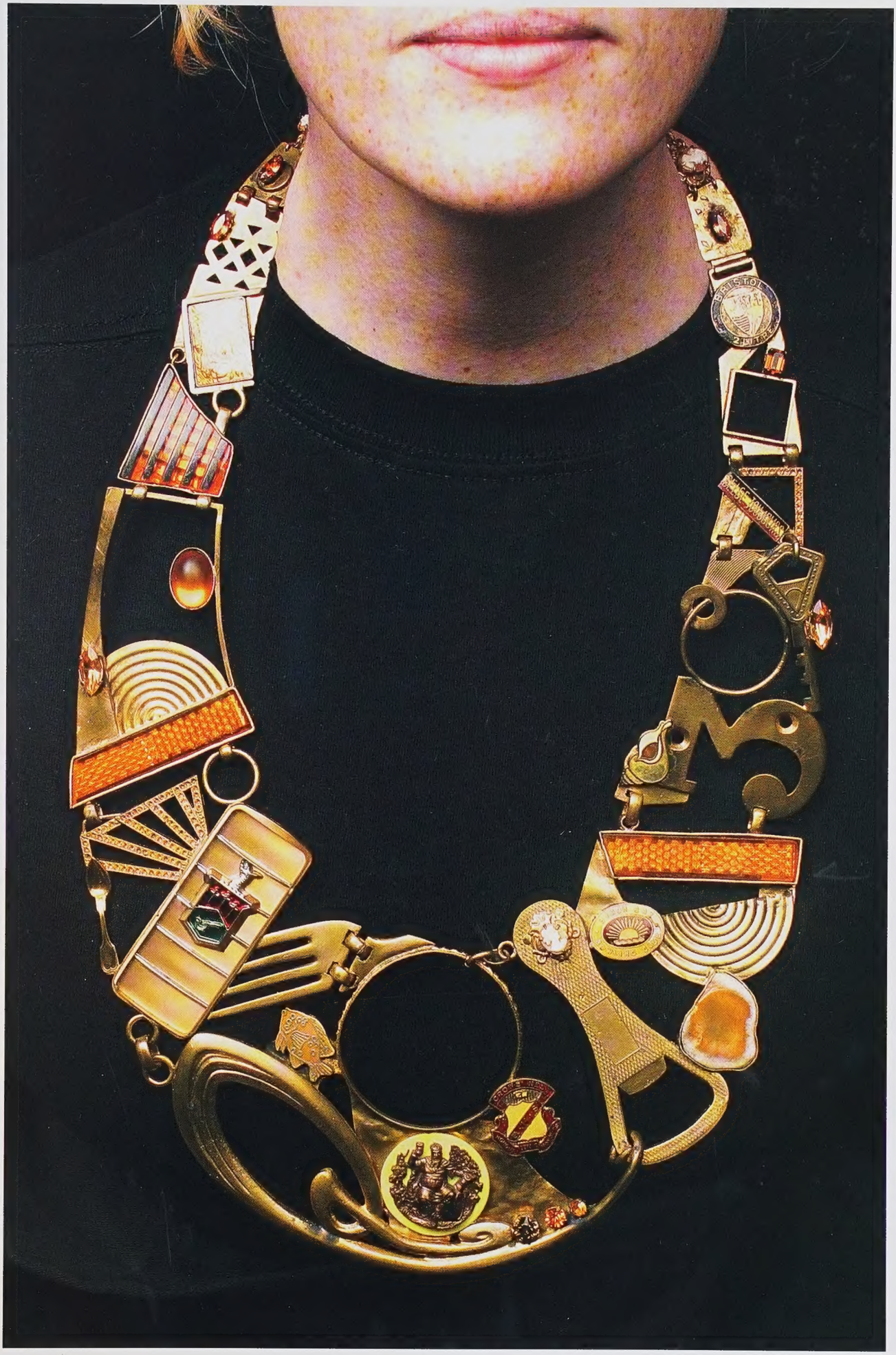
Cavalan was born in Paris in 1954, and as a teenager witnessed the student revolts that unfolded in Paris during May 1968. The uprisings had a significant impact on his development and perspective, as did those at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Mexico City Summer Olympic Games.[1] His interest in world events led to international travel after high school. While in Afghanistan he first seriously considered becoming a jeweler, as it seemed to him a portable trade.[2] Upon his return to Paris, he enrolled in the prestigious, but conservative, National Jewellery School (BJO).

The BJO taught him the skills necessary to embark on a career in commercial jewelry, but it was a traditional education, with neither the experimental techniques nor the intellectual and aesthetic engagement of an art school. To broaden his education, Cavalan simultaneously attended night art classes where he found that his teachers were far more encouraging of his artistic tendencies.[3]

After graduating from the BJO in 1979, Cavalan once again set out to travel around the world. While in Kathmandu, Nepal, he spent a few weeks in a local jeweler's workshop, studying his business practices and production. Among the many lessons learned was one that would greatly impact the course of Cavalan's direction as a jewelry artist: "The best part was to see that every bit of metal [could] be useful for some...function, including tribal artifacts that were traded in the market," he says. "[With a] simplicity of means—a brazier on the floor, a copper tube for a blow torch, a piece of charcoal—he could make the most precious jewels."

In 1980, Cavalan moved to Sydney, Australia, and took a position in jeweler Russell McColough's workshop, where he fabricated engagement and wedding rings. His BJO training had prepared him well for the intricate detailing and traditional techniques needed to create such forms. After five years, Cavalan decided it was time to build his own clientele, and left McColough's employ to establish his own independent studio. From 1985 to 1990, he continued to make traditional and commercial jewelry, but also began to create work that ventured more into the artistic realm. In 1990, Cavalan says he felt that overseas imports to Australia really began to saturate the marketplace; it was then that he decided to commit full-time to making one-of-a-kind jewelry.[4]

Gluttony from the series "Seven Scenes,"
1996-2001
mixed media
15 1/3 x 9 3/4"
Courtesy Pierre Cavalan



IN ESSENCE, HE IS CONSTRUCTING A UNIVERSE FROM SYMBOLS OF PAST TRAVELS AND EXPERIENCES USING SOUVENIRS AS A FETISH.

Cavalan's interest in recycling, an efficient use of materials, and cultural detritus—based on his memories of the Kathmandu jeweler—was reignited. He searched for materials throughout Sydney, bought objects at auction, and received pieces as gifts from friends. These objects often remained in his studio for years before being put to use in striking and sometimes humorous brooches and necklaces that suggest layers of commentary on politics, social history, nationalism, and the human condition.

Cavalan's methodology and appropriation of materials immediately brings to mind the art of Robert Rauschenberg, Ed Kienholz, and other artists working in *assemblage*; in fact, Cavalan cites Kienholz as an artist he greatly admires. Kienholz returned the compliment, visiting Cavalan's studio in Sydney, accompanying him on a foraging trip through junkyards, and inviting Cavalan to do the same in Berlin with him and his wife, Nancy.[5]

Cavalan's first significant exhibition, held in 1990 at the Ben Grady Gallery in Canberra, brought him to the attention of the National Gallery of Australia and the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, both of whom acquired brooches that year. Grace Cochrane, former curator of Australian decorative arts at the Powerhouse, recalled that she was "interested because [his jewelry] encouraged people to 'read' the messages that lay between the elements, and because the Powerhouse Museum was interested in social and industrial history as well as jewellery as an art form."[6] Helen Drutt discovered Cavalan's jewelry one year later, on a five-week tour of Australia that was organized by the Crafts Council of Australia.[7] Although Canberra was not on her original itinerary, Drutt traveled there and acquired a number of Cavalan's pieces.[8] Thus began a relationship that resulted in exhibitions at her Philadelphia gallery, the placement of Cavalan's jewelry in numerous private and museum collections, and further acquisition of pieces for her own collection.

Two brooches from 1990 demonstrate the evolution of Cavalan's aesthetic. *Wedding* is an early attempt to break with traditional conventions of ornament, and engage a broader dialogue through his choice of materials and narrative. However, though he uses found objects in place of precious materials, the composition remains conservative. With its ribbon bow, clusters of gemstones, and hanging drop, it recalls bodice ornaments from the seventeenth century.

Yet that same year, Cavalan leapt forward aesthetically with pieces such as the *La Tour Eiffel de Canberra*. The brooch exemplifies Cavalan's shift in interest from straightforward representation to multilayered meaning. It also marks the beginning of the artist's use of tourist souvenirs in his compositions, a device that quickly became a hallmark of his mature style. Taking the form of military decoration and embellished with "gemstones" and other official-looking insignia, the brooch conveys all of the pomp and circumstance normally associated with heraldry. What elevates this work beyond homage to military culture is the composition's focal point: a commemorative coin from Canberra's Telecom Tower (now called Telstra Tower). Built in 1980, the telecommunications tower soars above the capital city of Canberra as a potent symbol of communication and national pride, characteristics Cavalan has embodied in the brooch's exhilarating design.

While Cavalan insists that his work is open to many meanings, when pressed he concedes that some pieces have a particular narrative message. The series "Tourism is the Sickness of the 20th Century," for example, reflects larger conversations taking place in contemporary art and life. Specifically, it addresses the role of tourism in a changing global landscape.

In mining this subject matter Cavalan is not alone; exhibitions of painting, sculpture, photography, and new media have been organized around the theme. Cultural critics have also engaged the subject, drawing parallels between the experience of place and history and the physical object. For example, cultural analyst Marita Sturken asserts that tourism is essentially an innocent idea that allows countries to view themselves uncritically through the promulgation of souvenirs that stoke consumerism and kitsch sentiment.[9] She sees such kitsch as conveying "a kind of deliberate and highly constructed innocence, one that dictates particular kinds of sentimental responses and emotional registers."[10] Author Gillo Dorfles further identifies the emotional aspect of tourism as "one of the most noisome aspects of a rite that transforms and mythicizes every event with which the individual comes into contact, once he has been drawn into the mythagogic ritual."[11] By locating ornament within this

dialogue, Cavalan sets his work apart, and further extends the reach of his jewelry outside the realm of wearable art, questioning the very materials he incorporates in his pieces.

For I Am Not a Tourist, Collar of Sydney (1992) Cavalan deliberately used the city's stereotypical tourist imagery: a sailboat, palm trees, the Harbor Bridge commemorative medal. In essence, he is constructing a universe from symbols of past travels and experiences using souvenirs as a fetish.[12] The response that these images yield is a deliberate provocation of sentimental memory as well as a recording of one's participation in the ritual. His emphatic adoption of this nationalism—"I Am Not a Tourist" —speaks to his feelings of "otherness," as a Frenchman living in Australia. The concept of being a tourist is an intriguing one for Cavalan to confront given his years of travel and his emigration to Australia. How do you stop being a tourist in the world? Does saying so make it so?

opposite
La Tour de Eiffel Canberra Brooch, 1990
silver, imitation stones, enamel, found objects
6 1/4 x 3 x 1/2"
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Helen Williams Drutt Collection, gift of the Caroline Wiess Law Foundation
Photo: Thomas R. DuBrock

clockwise, from top left
Wedding (brooch), 1990
mixed media
4 1/3 x 3 2/3 x 1/3"
Collection Powerhouse Museum, Sydney
Photo: Jane Townsend

I am not a Tourist, Collar of Sydney Neckpiece, 1992
silver, found objects
8 1/4 x 7 5/16 x 3/8"
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Helen Williams Drutt Collection, gift of the Caroline Wiess Law Foundation
Photo: Thomas R. DuBrock

Air Neckpiece, 1993
enamel, souvenir tacks, mixed media
15 1/4 x 10 x 3/8"
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Helen Williams Drutt Collection, gift of the Caroline Wiess Law Foundation
Photo: Thomas R. DuBrock

"Fin de Siècle Chronicle," a series of neckpieces and brooches that Cavalan began in 1995, offers multiple levels of narrative, both implied and inferred. Regardless of Cavalan's intentions, the title of the series engenders particular associations, that of reviewing past history and imagining a future of new possibilities. Is the "Fin de Siècle Chronicle" series part of this tradition? The answer is both yes and no. The triptych of brooches, *Fin de Siècle Chronicle Nos. 1-3*, references three meaningful political and cultural institutions of the twentieth century: the military, religion, and royalty.[13] What makes these brooches so successful is their visual effect: the combination of a clear design program augmented by hints of a narrative. The delicacy and intricacy of their forms demonstrates Cavalan's skills as a master of proportion, scale, color, and texture.

In 1996, the Australia Council provided the funding for Cavalan to take part in an international artist residency program at the 18th Street Art Center in Santa Monica, California. The center has one of the few international exchange artist residencies in the Los Angeles area, and it offered Cavalan an opportunity to experiment and depart from his normal method of working. The result of that residency was the genesis of a five-year jewelry project, titled *Seven Scenes*. It consists of seven monumental neckpieces, each composed of references to Christianity's seven deadly sins, Buddhism's seven chakras, and an enlarged concept of the colors of the rainbow.[14]

THE DELICACY AND INTRICACY OF THEIR FORMS DEMONSTRATES CAVALAN'S SKILLS AS A MASTER OF PROPORTION, SCALE, COLOR, AND TEXTURE.

According to the artist, "Each piece is carefully composed of elements that contribute a clue to the multi-layered content of the piece which ranges from mythological allusions to the cross-cultural numerological mysticism associated with the number seven."[15] Historically, each of the seven deadly sins was linked with a particular color or animal, yet Cavalan chose to create his own connections using the chakras and colors of the rainbow:

Red/Sloth/Coccyx	Blue/Anger/Throat
Orange/Lust/Genitals	Purple/Greed/Mind
Yellow/Gluttony/Stomach	White/Pride/Crown
Green/Envy/Chest	

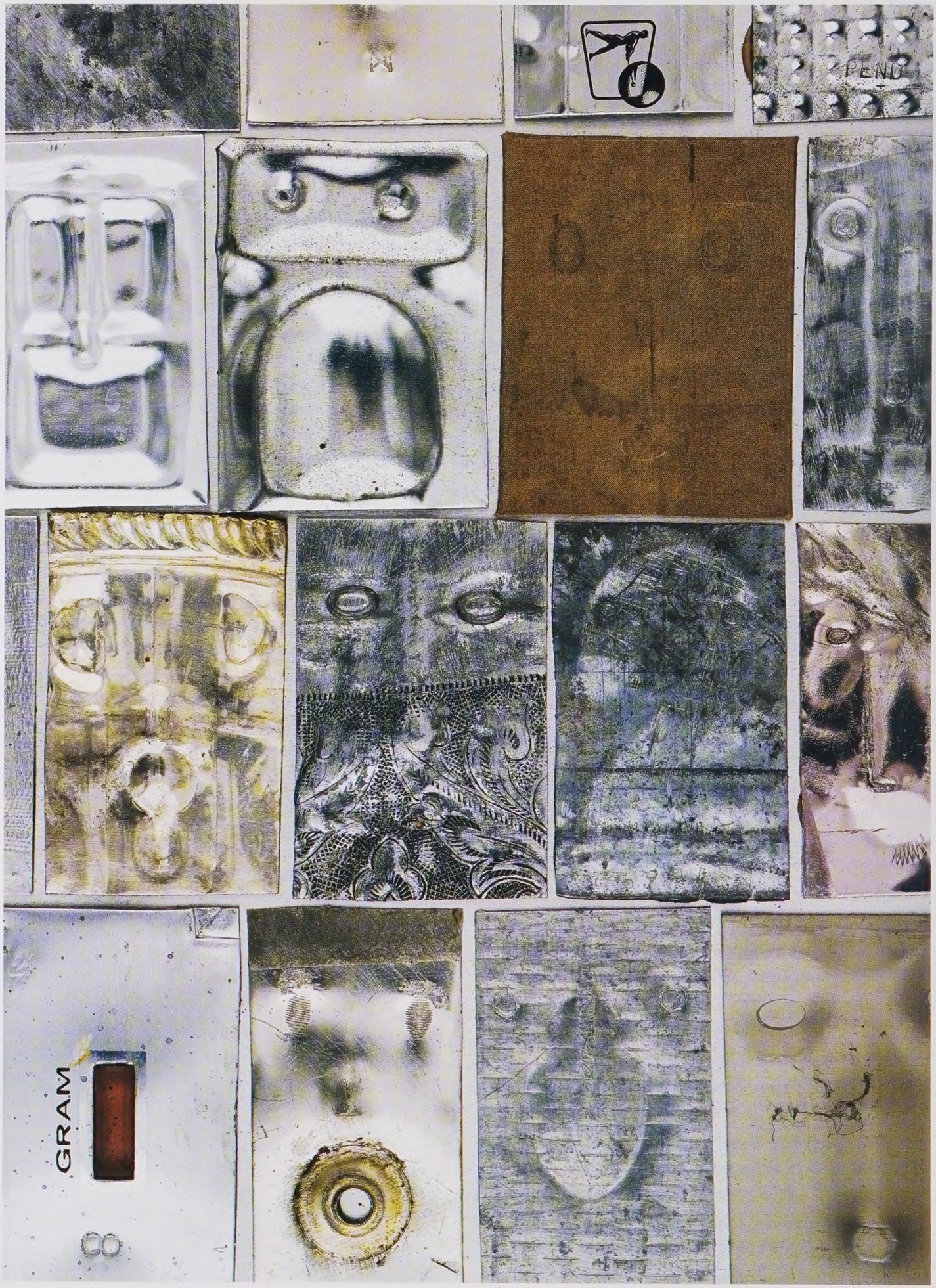
In addition to formulating the idea for the *Seven Scenes* and experiencing American culture for the first time, Cavalan's 1996 residency in the United States provided him with a number of opportunities for interaction with American jewelry artists. While in California, he lectured at San Diego State University at the invitation of Helen Shirk; gave a presentation at SOFA Miami; and attended the Yuma Conference, where he spent time with the artists John Grant, Robert Ebendorf, and Sandra Zilker.[16] Two years later, he again returned to the United States to teach at the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine.

Since the late 1990s, Cavalan has shown his work outside of Australia more frequently. A retrospective exhibition of Cavalan's jewelry was organized in 1999 by Amanda Game and Elizabeth Goring for the Ruthin Craft Centre, Wales. Titled "Bijoutier Sans Frontières" (A Jeweler Without Boundaries), the exhibition traveled to The Scottish Gallery in Edinburgh and the British Crafts Council in London. One critic described the exhibition as follows: "Cavalan's artistry, in reusing every day, found objects that are essentially worthless, to create jewellery with such symbolic power and meaning, makes him the modern equivalent of an alchemist; one of the life-enhancers identified in the couplet by Matthew Green (1696–1737), who 'By happy accident of mind/They turn to pleasure all they find."[17]

In 2003, Cavalan was invited by the San Francisco gallery Velvet da Vinci to participate in an exhibition called "Anti-War Medals: Artists Respond to the War."[18] The original brief asked 135 jewelry artists from 16 different countries to create a piece that addressed the war in Iraq and the United State's role in the conflict. Cavalan's submission offered a harsh critique of the war and the role within it, signified by the prominent placement of the Mobil Oil insignia. By justaposing familiar images of government buildings, the American eagle, skeletons, the Purple Heart with universal signs of happiness such as the "I Feel Good" medallion, Cavalan comments on the destruction of life at the hands of a government bent on war.

opposite
Fin de Siècle Chronicle Brooches, 1995
found objects, silver, enamel, and mixed media
6 1/2 x 4 x 3/4"; 7 x 4 x 1/2"; 6 x 3 3/4 x 1/4"
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Helen Williams Drutt Collection, gifts of the Caroline Wiess Law Foundation
Photo: Thomas R. DuBrock

above
Anti-War Medal (brooch), 2003
mixed media
3 x 3"
Courtesy Pierre Cavalan


PEND
GRAM

In addition to making jewelry, in the past decade Cavalan has explored ways to translate his assemblages into two-dimensional compositions. In 1996, he began a series of wall pieces with individual elements made from recycled metal plates onto whose surface he has embossed human faces. By choosing to focus on a range of human features and emotions, he invites the viewer to find himself within the composition. The idea of being confronted by a mirror-like range of human emotions is at turns familiar and powerful.

For this series, Cavalan was inspired by the paintings of his father-in-law Philip Martin, whose work featured expressionless human faces. Cavalan has also said that the concept for his more recent large works came from Joseph Campbell's book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.[19] Campbell's belief in the idea of monomyth—a proscribed path of mythological adventure that features trials, confrontation, and ultimately success for the hero with the aid of helpers or protective figures—appealed to the artist and resonated from the wall pieces back to his jewelry, both using impressed faces as the main decorative element.

As with his jewelry, Cavalan collected recycled materials for the wall pieces from a variety of sources, including scrap-metal suppliers and resale shops. After flattening the metal scraps into sheets and cutting them to a variety of sizes, he arranges screws, nails, wires, and other industrial elements into facial expressions, which are then embossed onto each sheet through the use of a hydraulic press.[20] Further textures are then added through repoussé techniques, stamping, and the use of multiple hammers.

Lost in the Crowd II (2007), now in the collection of the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, consists of 223 individual metal panels encased in a recycled frame. While Cavalan often favors using kaleidoscopic saturated colors or light-hued anodized aluminum in his wall pieces, this work focuses on the natural colors of the metal with only accents of other hues, lending them an unusual gravity. The relentless progression of faces often seen in Cavalan's wall compositions is relieved here by a more consistent use of purely industrial or ornamental panels that often feature text. The insertion of these elements draws attention to the materials themselves and invites the viewer to imagine their original purpose.

Cavalan's ability to create objects that function as a mirror on society elevates his work from mere artifact to something magical. His jewelry and wall pieces explore the divide between the personal and the universal. By giving the viewer an invitation to participate in the dialogue, Cavalan allows them to complete the artwork, thereby creating a democratic experience that is intimate and inclusive, public and private. Therein lies the enchantment of Pierre Cavalan's work. Cultural references may be different or even lost in translation, but the spirit and emotion that they ignite remains intact.

CINDI STRAUSS is curator of Modern and Contemporary Decorative Arts and Design at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

1 Pierre Cavalan, email correspondence with the author, May 22, 2008.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Pierre Cavalan, email correspondence with the author, May 26, 2008.
5 Pierre Cavalan, email correspondence with the author, May 24, 2008.
6 Grace Cochrane, email correspondence with the author, June 4, 2008.
7 Helen Williams Drutt English, "Collector's Statement," in Cindi Strauss, *Ornament as Art: Avant-Garde Jewelry from the Helen Williams Drutt Collection, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston*, exh. cat. (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers and Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2007): p.8.
8 Helen W. Drutt English, email correspondence with the author, June 13, 2008.
9 For a fascinating analysis of the role of tourism and memory in American political events see Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Duke University Press), 2007.
10 Marita Sturken, "Americans are Tourists of History," as published on the History News Network, October 29, 2007.
11 Gillo Dorfles, "Tourism and Nature," in *Kitsch: The World of Bad Taste* (New York: Universe Books, 1968), p. 153.
12 Ludwig Geisz discusses souvenirs as fetish symbols that have great emotional resonance in his essay "Kitsch-man as Tourist," in *Kitsch: The World of Bad Taste* (New York: Universe Books, 1968), 167.
13 Pierre Cavalan, email correspondence with the artist, May 26, 2008.
14 In addition to the Brisbane Art Gallery, the *Seven Scenes* neckpieces were shown at regional galleries throughout Australia as well as at the Ruthin Craft Centre in Wales, Helen Drutt: Philadelphia, and in Japan.
15 Pierre Cavalan. http://www.projectroom.com/pierrecavalan/sevenscenestext.php. Accessed May 23, 2008.
16 Pierre Cavalan, email correspondence with the author, May 24, 2008.
17 Colin Martin, "Australian Alchemy: La Bijoutier Sans Frontieres," *The Lancet 355* (June 24, 2000): 2258.
18 After leaving San Francisco, the exhibition traveled to venues in London, Norway, and Barcelona.
19 Pierre Cavalan. http://www.projectroom.com/pierrecavalan/wallpiecestext.php.
20 "Lost in a Crowd 2," Powerhouse Museum collection database. http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=373203

opposite
Lost in the Crowd II, 2007 (detail)
metal
40 1/2 x 26 x 1 1/2"
Collection Powerhouse Museum, Sydney
Photo: Jean-Francois Lanzarone

above
Drawing for Red/Sloth/Coccyx from the series "Seven Scenes," 1996
gouache and collage on canson mi teinte paper
16 1/4 x 23 1/2"
Courtesy Pierre Cavalan

by TONI GREENBAUM

LIVE WIRE

THE FANTASTICAL JEWELRY OF ALEXANDER CALDER

Though best known for his mobiles and stabiles, it could be said that Alexander Calder's first medium was jewelry. In 1906, at the age of eight, the precocious Calder crafted necklaces for his older sister Peggy's dolls from beads and bits of stripped copper electrical wire scavenged from the street. He later told Peggy, "I think best in wire."[1]

A 1919 graduate in mechanical engineering from Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey, Calder decided to become an artist while working as a fireman on a merchant ship and then a timekeeper at a Washington state logging camp. Thereafter, when a pupil at the Art Students League in New York, Calder supported himself as a freelance illustrator before setting sail for Europe in 1926. He headed straight to Paris, where he established the first in a series of ateliers. During his many sojourns there over the next few years he met other artists who were to significantly influence his oeuvre, most notably Piet Mondrian, whose geometric abstraction would lead Calder towards non-objectivity; Naum Gabo; Antoine Pevsner; Hans Arp; and Fernand Léger. For his close friend and painterly counterpart, Joan Miró, he created a ring made from a porcelain shard wrapped with brass wire in 1930.[2]

ALEXANDER CALDER
Necklace, ca. 1938
brass wire, glass, mirror
flower: 8 x 8"
© 2007 Calder Foundation, New York

WHILE MODERN ART CLEARLY INFORMED CALDER'S SCULPTURE, HIS JEWELRY MANIFESTS STRONG AFFINITIES WITH THE METALWORK OF ANCIENT, NATIVE, AND TRIBAL CULTURES.

Although he was invited to join "Abstraction-Création," a group of like-minded artists that boasted such members as Arp, Mondrian, and Pevsner, along with Robert Delaunay, William "Binks" Einstein, and Jean Hélion, Calder staunchly resisted allying himself with any canon or manifesto. He was a true original in his high art as well as his jewelry, which he began making in earnest in 1928. Consistently playful, the jewelry was an outgrowth of Calder's first wire portrait sculpture of Josephine Baker, the expatriate African-American entertainer, done during his initial year in Paris, as well as his kinetic circus (1926–31) composed of human and animal performers carved from wood and embellished with wire and found materials.[3] In 1929, on a return voyage to New York, he met his future wife, Louisa James, for whom he forged a gold wedding ring in the form of a spiral atop a helix, the first example in what would become a treasure trove of Calder "family jewels."[4]

While modern art clearly informed Calder's sculpture, his jewelry manifests strong affinities with the metalwork of ancient, native, and tribal cultures. Calder himself collected African, Oceanic, and pre-Columbian artifacts, admiring the makers' grand scale, simple and direct processes, and aesthetics. In 1943 he wrote: "...Somehow the primitive is usually much stronger than art in which technique and flourish abound."[5] As in so-called primitive metalwork, Calder often incorporated planish marks into the overall design, along with various connection systems such as twisting, wrapping, riveting, and floating hinges, in lieu of soldering. Closures frequently grew out of necklaces as decorative squiggles; pin fasteners emerged as in fibulae, curving behind the brooches' surfaces.

Calder drew upon a vast fund of shapes and motifs. He respected the simplicity of spirals and coils, along with natural forms based upon flora and fauna. Wit and humor, akin to the bizarre figures and sardonic associations of Surrealist imagery and word play, combined with his own mischievous nature, were ever-present in his jewelry, especially when he created his phantasmagoric "beasties" or used letters to actually spell out a visual pun. In 1929, for example, he fashioned a wire "chastity belt" for American dress designer Elizabeth "Babe" Hawes that incorporates the French café motto, "Ouvert la Nuit" (Open all Night).[6] Around 1935 he fabricated a brass wire belt buckle for Marcel Duchamp's wife, Teeny Matisse Duchamp, in the form of a reclining nude, whose spiraling breasts and belly function as the fastening mechanism. He made a brass necklace for Marc Chagall's Belarus-born wife, Bella, about 1942, spelling out her name in Cyrillic-like characters camouflaged among spirals and biomorphs. A generous man, Calder enjoyed forging the names or initials of friends and family as gifts. Although lukewarmly received by the world of high fashion, Calder's jewelry was coveted by aesthetes such as legendary American art doyenne Peggy Guggenheim, who commissioned a silver headboard replete with hanging fish for her Venice palazzo, painter Georgia O'Keeffe, silversmith Frances Whitney, and French actress Jeanne Moreau.[7]

Calder was decidedly not mercantile, but realized, nevertheless, that the jewelry so championed by his friends and patrons on both sides of the Atlantic might supplement his income as a fine artist. He was adamant, however, that the jewelry only be sold through fine art galleries. Although no records of any sales exist, Calder's jewelry

opposite
ALEXANDER CALDER
Brooch, c. 1938
brass wire, glass, mirror, steel wire
9 1/2 x 5 7/8 x 1 1/8"
© 2007 Calder Foundation, New York

clockwise from top left
Georgia O'Keeffe wearing ALEXANDER CALDER's *OK* brooch, ca. 1945
Photo: Carl Van Vechten, 1950

ALEXANDER CALDER
on wall:
Necklace, ca. 1943
silver wire
pendant: 5 1/4 x 3 1/4"

on surface, from left:
Bracelet, c. 1947
gold wire
2 13/16 x 2 7/8 x 2 9/16"

Cufflinks, ca. 1940
silver wire
1 1/2 x 1/2 x 1/4" each

Tiara, ca. 1938
silver wire
4 1/2 x 7 x 6 1/8"
All © 2007 Calder Foundation, New York

ALEXANDER CALDER
Necklace, ca. 1943
silver wire, string, ribbon
element length: 5"
© 2007 Calder Foundation, New York

CALDER SUBSCRIBED TO THE BAUHAUS PHILOSOPHY OF INTEGRATION BETWEEN THE FINE AND DECORATIVE ARTS. HE BELIEVED IN THE DEMOCRATIC USE OF NON-PRECIOUS, INEXPENSIVE MATERIALS.

was offered commercially for the first time in 1929 at Fifty-Sixth Street Galleries in New York, as part of the exhibition "Alexander Calder: Paintings, Wood Sculptures, Toys, Wire Sculptures, Jewelry, Textiles," and at Galerie Neumann-Nierendorf in Berlin.[8] In 1937 the Mayor Gallery in London showed jewelry alongside his mobiles and stabiles.[9] The first exhibition dedicated solely to Calder jewelry was held at Artek Gallery in Helsinki in 1938. Surely Calder's most ardent jewelry dealer was Marian Willard, who organized exhibitions in 1940 and 1941 at her eponymous New York gallery. She displayed the pieces with comparable taste and sensitivity accorded painting and sculpture. "These works of art are savage and deliberate and self-confidently sophisticated," wrote Willard. "This is a master modern artist's contribution to the history of fashion. For a world already in chains, it is superb stuff."[10] Confident regarding the jewelry's success, and, thereby concerned about having sufficient quantities available, Willard suggested to Calder that he have multiples made by other artisans.[11] Calder strongly objected, preferring all works to remain original even at the sacrifice of potential sales, stating "...I would rather keep the thing on the 'objet d'art' basis even if some people have to go without."[12] The Willard Gallery shows were tremendous successes, leading to specialized jewelry exhibitions at galleries in several cities around the United States. In 1943, for example, the Arts Club of Chicago showed Calder jewelry, and Perls Gallery in New York organized an exhibition in 1966.

Calder's preoccupation with jewelry around 1940 appears to have influenced his sculpture, which became more whimsical and slender, and sometimes featured delicate, intimately scaled elements.[13] An acquaintance of Walter Gropius, whom he probably met while visiting Berlin in 1929, Calder subscribed to the Bauhaus philosophy of integration between the fine and decorative arts. He believed in the democratic use of non-precious, inexpensive materials. Most of Calder's jewelry was made from brass or silver wire, either left round or hammered flat, in tandem with common materials such as steel wire, wood, glass, leather, ceramic, cord, ribbon, mirror, bone, agate, and occasionally semi-precious stones. Calder was nonetheless intrigued by gold as "heirloom material," and used it whenever he could afford to, particularly on commission.[14]

Museums consistently included Calder's jewelry along with his sculpture in exhibitions. In 1941 the San Francisco Museum of Art organized "Mobiles by Alexander Calder, Stabiles and Jewelry," which showed 80 pieces of jewelry; James Johnson Sweeney and Marcel Duchamp curated a major retrospective for The Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1943, entitled "Alexander Calder: Sculptures and Constructions," that included 22 pieces; "Jewelry and Drawings by Alexander Calder," spotlighting 41 jewels, was shown at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston in 1956.

Following World War II, interest in craft and the handmade blossomed in the United States; it was viewed as evocative of a lost humanism. Jewelry was regarded as an important means of personal

opposite
Anjelica Huston wearing
ALEXANDER CALDER's *The Jealous Husband*, ca. 1940
Photo: Evelyn Hofer, 1976

this page
ALEXANDER CALDER
Bracelet, ca. 1948
silver wire
2 3/4 x 6 x 4"
© 2007 Calder Foundation, New York

ALEXANDER CALDER
I Brooch, 1948
silver wire, glass, steel wire
6 1/2 x 7 1/4"
Collection of Ingeborg ten Haeff, New York
© 2007 Calder Foundation, New York

CERTAINLY NO OTHER ARTIST WIELDED SUCH A FORMIDABLE INFLUENCE ON GENERATIONS OF FUTURE PRACTITIONERS.

expression. In 1946 MoMA organized a traveling exhibition called "Modern Jewelry Design," intended to offer handmade jewelry as an alternative to industrially manufactured costume accessories. The exhibition presented jewelry by fine artists such as Calder, Harry Bertoia, José de Rivera, Jacques Lipschitz, and Richard Pousette-Dart, along with "modernist" studio jewelers like Margaret de Patta, Paul Lobel, and Adda Husted-Anderson.[15] Calder was at the height of his fame, and his influence on such handcrafted jewelry was palpable. Certainly no other artist wielded such a formidable influence on generations of future practitioners.

Modernist jeweler Ed Weiner operated a shop near The Museum of Modern Art from 1947 to 1966. One day a woman wearing a pair of Calder earrings entered his establishment. Bursting with enthusiasm, Weiner described espying the earrings, not the person, declaring: "I remember a pair of mobile earrings walking into the store...waving around someone's face....They broke all the rules...."[16] Weiner was just one of a corps of studio jewelers working throughout the United States in the mid-twentieth century who were informed to some extent by Alexander Calder, either his revolutionary mobiles and stabiles or his own trailblazing jewelry.

Harry Bertoia, a sculptor and jeweler, who chaired the metals program at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, from 1937 to 1943, was governed both by Calder's high art and his jewelry. Working in a similar manner, they exhibited together in the 1940s at Nierendorf Gallery in New York and Alexander Girard Gallery in Detroit. Massive scale and movement, both actual and implied, hallmarks of African-American jeweler Art Smith's neckpieces, recall Calder mobiles. Advertisements in several mid-twentieth-century periodicals illustrate Smith's affinity with Calder. The April 1949 issue of New York tourist publication *Gotham Guide* printed an ad for Art Smith's shop, Craft House, which read: "Spectacular cuffs and mobiles in jewelry...."[17] Three-ring lacquered brass or sterling silver earrings were referred to as "The Magnificent Mobile" in a New Yorker ad from 1953.[18] In a recent article about Smith published in *Vogue* magazine, Lynn Yaeger writes: "Smith was one of a number of independent designers with artistic sensibilities closer to Calder than Cartier...."[19] Modernist jeweler Elsa Freund's bracelets and brooches of wrapped glazed earthenware and fused glass "stones" suggest the bold aesthetic presence and distinctive technical aspects of Calder's jewelry. California sculptor Claire Falkenstein referenced Calder in almost all of her works from the 1950s to 1990s, ranging from articulated brass, silver or copper "body jewelry" to the iron and glass shard gates she created for Peggy Guggenheim's house in Venice.[20]

Calder was an enthusiastic and prolific jewelry artist; he produced as many as 1,800 different pieces, mostly between 1933 and 1952. His impact endures, in jewelry by makers as geographically diverse as Vered Kaminski of Israel, Catherine Mauger of France, and American artist Karen Harris. It is, indeed, difficult to look anywhere from mid-twentieth to early twentieth-first century studio jewelry without finding homage to Alexander Calder.

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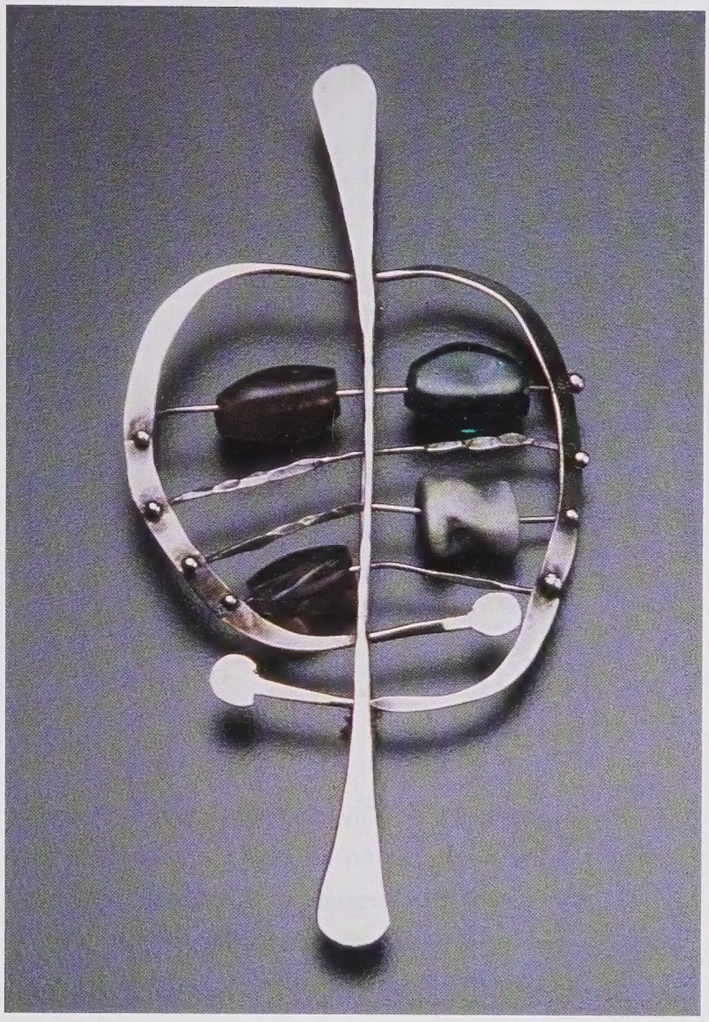

[1] Alexander Calder, as quoted in Jean Lipman, *Calder's Universe* (New York: Harrison House, 1976), p. 238.
[2] This ring was, perhaps, part of a suite made from fragments of ancient pottery Calder had collected from the parapets of the citadel while visiting Calvi on the west coast of Corsica in 1930.
[3] Calder's *Circus* is on permanent view at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.
[4] Lacking sufficient skill in working with gold, Calder was aided by Bucci, a Paris jeweler. See Alexander S.C. Rower and Holton Rower, *Calder Jewelry* (New York: Calder Foundation, 2007), p. 254.
[5] Ibid., p. 257.
[6] Carol Kino, "Precious Metals," *The New York Times Style Magazine*, (2 December 2007): 170.
[7] Calder's jewelry was initially misunderstood by most designers of haute couture, probably due to its high cost relative to costume jewelry of the time, large scale, and departure from typical references to precious jewelry. Nonetheless, in 1940, Carmel Snow, the renowned editor of *Harper's Bazaar*, was pleased to photograph several pieces for a spread in the magazine. See Rower, *Calder Jewelry*, p. 256.
[8] Jane Adlin, "Calder and Adornment," in Rower, *Calder Jewelry*, p. 177.
[9] The term "mobile" was first applied to Calder's motorized sculpture by Marcel Duchamp in 1931; shortly thereafter, Hans Arp coined the term "stabile" for the static work. See Rower, *Calder Jewelry*, pp. 254-5.
[10] Ibid., 257.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Alexander Calder as quoted in Adlin, "Calder and Adornment," p. 181.
[13] Lipman, *Calder's Universe*, p. 209.
[14] Rower, *Calder Jewelry*, p. 258.
[15] For a discussion of modernist jewelry, see the author's *Messengers of Modernism: American Studio Jewelry*, 1940-1960 (Paris: Flammarion, 1996).
[16] Ed Weiner, interview by Dorothy Seckler, New York, Archives of American Art, 5 September 1962.
[17] Charles L. Russell, *Art Smith, His Life and Work*, unpublished manuscript, part 1, chapter 4, p. 11.
[18] Ibid., p. 15.
[19] Lynn Yaeger, "Silver Streak," *Vogue* (December 2007): p. 228.
[20] See *The Modernist Jewelry of Claire Falkenstein* (Long Beach, CA: Long Beach Museum of Art, 2004).

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opposite
ART SMITH
"Patina" Necklace, ca. 1955
brass
11 1/8 x 6 1/8 x 1 1/8"
Collection The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection, gift of Paul Leblanc
Photo: MMFA, Giles Rivest

above, clockwise from top left
ED WIENER
"Abacus" Brooch, ca. 1950
silver, tourmaline, amethyst, beryl
2 x 4 1/4 x 3/8"
Collection The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection, gift of Paul Leblanc
Photo: MMFA, Giles Rivest

ELSA FREUND
Bracelet, ca. 1946
aluminum, glazed earthenware, fused glass
2 3/4 x 3 x 2 3/8"
Collection The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection, gift of Paul Leblanc

HARRY BERTOIA
Brooch, 1942
brass
3 1/2 x 3 x 3/8"
Collection The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection, gift of Paul Leblanc

by LISA GRALNICK

START WITH THE WOUND

THE WORK OF IRIS EICHENBERG

The fundamental and austere practice of putting pencil to paper, drawing, has always had the ability to embody a sense of urgency and ephemerality, and as such it occupies a cherished place in the visual arts hierarchy. An art object produced without interference of clumsy processes and materials, perched on the edge of its own annihilation (erasure, or worse, being crumpled and tossed away), is simply irresistible. And, not unlike the fanatical gardener who wakes at sunrise daily and immediately surveys the spoils of her efforts, only to repeat the ritual again before dusk, there is something fortuitous about glimpsing an ever-changing process through stolen frozen stills. Feeling privy to a narrative that is in a state of *becoming*, we do not long for resolution, but quite the contrary: our hope is that the cinematic display will continue indefinitely, and that we will have the privilege of witnessing it though a series of brief evidential markers. Such is the seductive phenomenology of the work of Iris Eichenberg.

Eichenberg works within a paradigm of art-making that is both contemporary yet idiosyncratic, bred of a tradition that can be understood as an evolution of the methods of figuration: an attempt to depict our human collective experience in a meaningful and reflective manner, as an allegory in the broadest sense. Her work has a significant allegiance, albeit at times a reactionary one, to German Romanticism. Hers is a vision in which sensory experience is supercharged and the grand themes of life, death, family, and identity lay in the details and not in her veiled narrative. It makes an argument for meaning from a fragmented, pieced-together montage of memory data, and it negotiates this challenge in the pixilated language of its own post *mechanical reproduction* time. Non-confrontational, non-academic, and apolitical, yet still capable of provoking profound discomfort, it is, like the stranger hugging you unexpectedly on the street, almost unbearably earnest and intimate. It is ritualistic, requiring an acceptance of the authority of its premise, and it is work that fuses the urgency of a drawing, the surgical skill of the filmmaker, and the moral neutrality of the artifact. As an attempt to reclaim and resurrect something apparently lost in much of contemporary art as political activity, we must look backwards to understand it.

Girlfriends, from the series "Wolle," 1998
wool, human hair, dental material, branches, objects
length 8-12" each

IN AN ERA WHEN THE ARTS SEEM TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE ANESTHETIZING PHANTASMAGORIA OF COMMODIFICATION, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT IT IS AN APPROPRIATE TIME FOR AN ART THAT IS REACTIONARY, URGENT, AND SENSUAL.

I confess at this point that I am not going to talk about individual pieces by Iris Eichenberg. If you are looking in Eichenberg's work for specific meaning and symbology, or a well-defined narrative that is directly translatable into linguistic terms, I cannot accommodate. What I can do is circle around like a hawk, hoping to get closer still and provide some meaningful *context* through which to view the work as through layers of increasingly transparent gauze. This is difficult work, and it is work that conveys meaning through the senses, and any attempt to academicize it any further than I already am would amount to butchering.

> The camera can aid us in knowledge of fascism, because it provides an "aesthetic" experience that is nonauratic, critically "testing," capturing with its "unconscious optics" precisely the dynamics of narcissism on which the politics of fascism depends, but which its own auratic aesthetics conceals. Such knowledge is not historicist. The juxtaposition of photographs of Hitler's face and Darwin's illustrations will not answer the complexities of von Ranke's question of " how it actually was" in Germany, or what determined the uniqueness of its history. Rather, the juxtaposition creates a synthetic experience that resonates with our own time, providing us, today, with a double recognition—first, of our own infancy, in which, for so many of us, the face of Hitler appeared as evil incarnate, the bogeyman of our own childhood fears. Second, it shocks us into awareness that the narcissism that we have developed as adults, that functions as an anaesthetizing tactic against the shock of modern experience—and that is appealed to daily by the phantasmagoria of mass culture—is the ground from which fascism can again push forth. To cite Benjamin: "In shutting out the experience (of the inhospitable, blinding age of big-scale industrialism), the eye perceives an experience of a complementary nature, in the form of its spontaneous after-image." Fascism is that afterimage. In its reflecting mirror we see ourselves.[1]

In these chilling closing remarks of Susan Buck-Morss's *Aesthetics and Anesthetics* essay (1992), the social theorist refers to the now-legendary photographs of Hitler that were juxtaposed against those of ordinary people featured in Darwin's work *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. The comparisons reveal that Hitler's facial expressions, which he reportedly practiced in a mirror under the tutelage of an opera singer, did not project the expected aggression or rage of a ruthless authoritarian; on the contrary, they suggested both fear and emotional and physical suffering, a propagandistic tactic that successfully appealed to an entire nation that saw in his face their own image. Buck-Morss reminds us that these photos not only stir recognition of our own reaction to Hitler as "evil incarnate," but, more importantly, they remind us how fully the agencies of mass culture can and have been be used to soothe the sense of alienation that modernity has delivered.

The capitalist extravaganza continues to blind us from the truth of our own apathetic narcissism, at the same time that it encourages and fuels it. One only needs to think of the American Neo-Nazi movement, and the way it acquires young white male converts by appealing to their wounded machismo through a messenger who is *just like them*, a mirror into which their own castrated conceit is reflected. Within a message that is both familiar and flattering, promising to focus on our individualized despair by identifying an enemy, the seeds of fascism have been sown. In an era when the arts seem to actively participate in the anesthetizing phantasmagoria of commodification, it is possible that it is an appropriate time for an art that is reactionary, urgent, and sensual, and that the work of Iris Eichenberg may well represent a noble effort in that direction.

Buck-Morss published her essay as a response to the more famous one by Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), referred to simply as his *Artwork* essay. A cursory look at this essay (which has been analyzed *ad nauseum*) is necessary. In *Artwork*, written shortly after the Nazis came to power and the author, a Jewish cultural critic and Marxist, had fled Germany to France, Benjamin examines the aural and phenomenological characteristics of the traditional handmade art object, gleaned through sensory cognition, and their replacement with the political, social, and didactic advantages inherent in an art object that is reproducible by mechanical means (specifically, the newly emerging arts of photography and film). Benjamin identified the traditional art object as potentially dangerous, citing both the glorification of war and industrialization as expressed by the Italian Futurist manifesto, and the implicit elitism of the ritualized art object. In many ways, history proved him right, as the Nazis advocated a return to more traditional Romantic modes of artmaking as part of a quest for the eradication of the decadence and depravity of modernity. Although Benjamin acknowledged the importance of *sensorium cognito*, thinking through the senses, to the handmade art object, and entertained an idealistic notion that Marxism would ignite the human sensual experience through labor, he felt that the shock of modern life, including warfare and industrialization, had mandated a more significant mission for the arts, and his essay has become synonymous with, as Buck-Morss noted, " an affirmation of mass culture and of the new technologies through which it is disseminated."[2]

The most rudimentary aspect of Benjamin's seminal work is on his isolation of the concept of "aura" as a defining component of the authentic (non-reproducible) work of art, and the perceived benefit of its loss in the ability of photography and film to provide a politicized, democratic, and accessible art for the masses. The aura that accompanies a traditional art object requires a distance that allows for the artwork's autonomy and disinterested contemplation, always as part of a ritual. Hence, there is an implied authority of the

opposite
Untitled (necklace), from Reitveld Academy graduation show, 1994
silver, wool
diameter 10"

Untitled (brooch), from the series "Blossom," 1998
silver, wool
4 x 3 x 1 1/2"

above
Loss installation at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 2004
wood, wool blankets, mirrors

authentic artwork that flirts with imperialism. As with phenomena in nature—contemplation of mountains from a distance, a beautiful sunset—our perception of the uniqueness of the thing perceived is contingent on our inability to reproduce it, own it (metaphorically speaking), nor bring it any closer physically, theoretically, or perceptually than it is. *"The instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production,"* wrote Benjamin, *"the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice—politics."*[3]

Benjamin was fascinated by the emerging art form of film, and *Artwork* became, in the ensuing years, seminal to the field of film criticism. His discussion of the machinery of film and the place of the cameraman (*auteur*) within this milieu of the tools of mechanical reproduction, visible to the maker but invisible to the viewer of the final work, sheds light on the fascinating process of the penetration and dissection of reality by reality. His comparison of the traditional painter-artist with the cameraman-artist, and the distance (again, the aura or lack thereof) that separates each from his subject, draws attention to the ability of the new, reproducible media to both see more than the naked eye and to "critically test" reality, reassembling the fragments or frames "under a new law" to create "an aspect of reality that is free of all equipment."[4]

This "penetration of reality," as opposed to the mimetic model on which all prior artmaking was based, is central to Iris Eichenberg's work, which is oddly cinematic in its democratic use of both real and reconstructed fragments of reality that seem to present an image of action and randomness that exists in real frozen time. It is my assertion that Eichenberg's art can only be understood in the light of what can be called the age of *post-mechanical reproduction* in which we find ourselves today. Hers is a reactionary vision, an attempt to restore the aura of the traditional art object with the aesthetic tools of perception of the mechanical age, and to understand it we must take a brief look at what transpired in the 56 years between Benjamin's essay and that of Buck-Morss.

Much occurred in the world in the years between 1936 and 1991, including World War II, the advent of the digital information age, post-modernism, and the almost complete collapse of the Marxist ideals that led to a tragically corrupted Communism. In addition, arguably the most important German artist of his generation, Joseph Beuys, was producing work with supercharged materials that addressed, using a personal mythology based on his experiences in the war, issues of German nationalism, reconciliation, and social progressiveness. Buck-Morss's essay recognizes that the new media Benjamin innocently championed has produced, in addition to a repertoire of film, photographic, video, and digital masterpieces that remain some of the most important artworks of the twentieth century, a consumer-based culture of fantasy, escapism, and lack of accountability that Benjamin could never have imagined.

IRIS EICHENBERG'S WORK CAN BE SEEN AS AN ATTEMPT TO RESTORE TO ART THE NOTION OF THE AURA IN A *POST-MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION AGE.*

Questioning his tripartite model of art, aesthetics, and politics, she suggests that Benjamin has engaged in a sort of linguistic roulette in his conclusion, since the politicizing of art in the way Benjamin advocated would (and did) change the nature of art as it is defined in modernity. Tracing the concept of *aesthetics* as etymologically rooted in the perception of reality through the senses, continuing with its evolution into the detached contemplation of beauty and the sublime, she delivers us to its current incarnation as the philosophical and intellectual study of art. Subsequently, she presents a disturbing picture of the evolution of mass media into an anesthetic, a mode by which we are numbed from the shock of an everyday experience plagued with violence, overstimulation, industrialization, lack of accountability, and the detachment from genuine social contact. She outlines the way in which a neurologically based sensory environment is at the core of social behavior, and the way in which the commodity-based "phantasmagoria" feeds our narcissism. Thus, modern aesthetics as detached contemplation and intellectual inquiry joins the rank of drug addiction, television, and consumerism, as an anesthetic with which the neurologically based sensorial experience has been

rendered numb. Acknowledging that human sensorium is, ultimately, the most reliable device of both individual and societal accountability and human self-preservation, Buck-Morss presents the anesthetized state as one that is perpetually vulnerable to its nemesis or mirror image, fascism. There is an enemy, and the enemy is the media that corrupts.

One may legitimately ask at this point, "What does all of this have to do with the work of Iris Eichenberg?" Perhaps nothing, and more likely everything. In the time between Benjamin's and Buck-Morss's essays, much also happened in the art world. The issue of distance and loss of aura was already pivotal in the work of the Surrealists and Dadaists; Marcel Duchamp's readymades can be interpreted as early examples of a reverberating echo from the age of mechanical reproduction. The visceral, socially progressive work of Joseph Beuys, the most significant mentor to a generation of postwar German artists that includes Anselm Kiefer, Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke, and Blinky Palermo, fueled German artists to confront their recent past, rise above it, and redefine Germany. Now, in the early twenty-first century, it all seems a moot point, so complete is the blurring of distinctions between advertising and art.

It is my basic contention that Iris Eichenberg's work can be seen as an attempt to restore to art the notion of the aura in a *post–mechanical reproduction age*. She has taken her experience of reality, shaped by the non-auratic and omnipotent lens of the photographic, cinematic, and digitized eras of her time, and panned the landscape of memory for snippets and fragments, that, once assembled, create a montaged image comprised of bits of sense-data, both real and constructed, that form a cinematic tableau. They are indeed three-dimensional drawings. She employs a process of making that attempts a restoration of the aura through sensual urgency and fragile tangential relationships that seem to be assembled by chance. The works exist in a limbo between the aural and non-aural and, as such, they are neither truly political nor truly detached and authoritarian. It is their neutrality that, like an artifact, makes them so disarming.

Iris Eichenberg is, arguably, a German artist—though she insists her work is rooted more in Holland since she studied and practiced there. She grew up during the post postwar generation of the '60s and '70s on a farm in Gottingen and had an early short career as a nurse. (After experiencing her warm, sensual, nurturing presence, not to mention the repeated appearances of medical apparatus, body parts, and wound-like images in her work, her nursing background makes perfect sense.) Eventually, she studied jewelry in the Netherlands at the Rietveld Academy, under Onno Boekhoudt and later Ruudt Peters, and continued to live and work in Holland for many years, leading the jewelry program at the Rietveld until she moved to Michigan to accept her current position as Artist in Residence and Head of the Metals/Jewelry program at Cranbrook Academy of Art two years ago. Having recently visited her at the Academy, she seems to be infusing the program with a new jewelry-oriented direction, which favors broad material exploration in service of an idea, and de-emphasizing the more rigorous metalsmithing practice of the Gary Griffin era. This, again, makes perfect sense, and the entire field is poised to see how these changes will be reflected in the student output over the next few years. Unquestionably, a new era has begun for metals at Cranbrook.

Conversations with Eichenberg reveal an attitude that can be considered anti-craft. Her own training at the Rietveld did not require intensive metalsmithing practice, and she, admittedly, does not particularly value labor or technical skill as assets. In fact, her creative endeavors suggest an obvious disdain for the authoritarian propaganda of the craft agenda. Eichenberg's approach, not unlike that of several other jewelers from the U.S. and more abroad, and a much larger population in the general arts community, can be seen as

opposite
Untitled, from the series "Bombay Rubber-Delhi Thoughts," 2000
rubber, silver
3 x 7 x 1/2"

above
Untitled (brooch), from the series "Bombay Rubber-Delhi Thoughts," 2000
rubber, silk, silver, glass
4 x 2 x 1"

SHE IS A CREATOR OF AN ARTIFICE OF REALITY THAT IS MORE REAL THAN REALITY ITSELF.

a rebellion against the fascist regime of craft practice that, in an effort to defend its relevance, has mandated that things be done a certain way with certain tools and with an unerring respect for tradition (that, in return, promises a certain freedom within the confines of that tradition and the license to critique it). The rule she snubs goes something like this: You can make whatever you want, as long as it is made well by metalsmithing standards. In her work, a certain roughness in execution is de rigueur, and it may appear cavalier to the more traditional metalsmith. Her work is more akin to drawing, and she does not let process interfere with urgency. Nevertheless, in Eichenberg's work, the rules of making that apply to craft traditions are most often intentionally disregarded, without apology, and one must reckon with the impressive self-confidence of a methodology that is direct, evidentiary, poetic, and both personal yet intentionally ambiguous. She does not hide, but she also does not give it away.

Eichenberg's oeuvre is comprised of a dozen or so titled bodies of work. They follow a clear continuum that begins with her early solipsistic "body part" pieces—knitted breasts, hearts, and gastrointestinal parts—and moves on to works that explore notions of warmth, family, wounding, healing, home, and homeland. Then, after a *tabula rasa* in *Weiss* (White), the work branches out (literally) to issues of community, cultural voyeurism, and displacement, ending in her most recent group of works titled *Tenement/Timelines*. She has moved from the inner to the outer. The titles of other collections, such as "Heimat" (Homeland), "Warmte" (Warm or Warmth); "Wolle" (Wool), "Bombay Rubber/Delhi Thoughts," and "Shurfen" (To Dig or Mine) reveal the evocative mission of her work and the emphasis on an *a posteriori*, or experiential, accumulation. The approach is vaguely reminiscent of the early works of Joseph Beuys, nakedly biographical yet devoid of narrative. I am reminded once again of the all-seeing non-auratic lens of the camera, able to zoom in and out, to magnify and sharpen focus, to isolate and mete out meaning, to penetrate reality like a surgeon. The resonance of the work is in its ability to withhold just enough while appearing effortless.

An interesting aspect of Iris Eichenberg's work is her non-hierarchical relationship to materials and time. Her works are comprised of an array of the precious and mundane—bone, silver, fabric, tree branches, linen gauze, rubber hosing and vintage hot-water bottles, knitted wool, porcelain, leather, bits of this or that—a button, a garter belt clip—and her reverence (or lack thereof) for her materials seems unfailingly democratic. The way she snips a hand outline from leather, or bends a silver wire into a hook, or wraps gauze around the tip of a white porcelain branch or rhizome, is astounding in its consistency. There is no apparent hesitation, no blending to hide connections and transitions, no fussiness, no extra emphasis on the handwrought silver parts. Each element is charged with its own baggage of memory-data, which she neither tries to erase nor enhance. There is only a tangential relationship between parts. Her interest in evidence is obvious but, whether genuine or fabricated, it is given the same phenomenological weight. Often the fragments are marked with scratching, sgraffito, stitching, writing, or molding (as in

the carved cast chicken hearts), but her mark blends almost flawlessly with those left by the hands of time. In fact, there seems to be no time encased in the works, they are but a mere breath. She is a creator of an artifice of reality that is more real than reality itself. It is an examined, edited, and reassembled reality, and one that owes at least some debt to the age of mechanical reproduction.

Although the Netherlands has been, for the last half century, the center of a movement in jewelry and body adornment that has pioneered the exploration of alternative materials and the breaking of social conventions, and it would be easy to ally Iris Eichenberg's work with a Dutch model of material experimentation, social progressiveness/feminism, and an exploration of the body as political instrument, I am not going to do that. Holland is not, for me, where her more significant affinity lies. Eichenberg is a romantic, and her work falls into a tradition of postwar German work that was forced, after the complete corruption of Romanticism by the Nazis, to find a new way of expressing that dark, intensely rich, and sensually based search for individuation that is at the heart of German Romanticism. But the residual effects of fascism produced a culture suspicious of sentimentality, epic masterpieces, and grand themes. Hence, Joseph Beuys's quote in the title of my essay, a proclamation he would often make at the start of lectures late in his career, could as easily be uttered by Iris Eichenberg. Her work also began with the wound. Hers is an aesthetic that descends from Beuys himself, but also from Georg Baselitz, Reinhard Mucha, Meret Oppenheim, Eva Hesse, and an entire generation of non-German Fluxus and Arte Povera artists—Robert Filliou, Jannis Kounellis, et al—whose German-influenced work uses a vocabulary of supercharged materiality capable of producing poignancy. Not surprising, of course, that the two most important places that this type of work emerged is in Germany and Italy—both countries in which fascism, and its after-effects, became an integral part of cultural identity.

Early works by Iris Eichenberg included knitted wool tube-like forms suggesting blood vessels, organs, and human orifices, which later developed into sagging empty pink knitted breasts and sanguine hearts, some suspended from cut branches sealed with wax. These pieces, some of which have de-sexualized renditions of vaginas, clitorises, and nipples, are more comforting than shocking, more accessible than clinical, and present an image of femininity that is both domestic and mundanely functional, a body meant to create, feed, nourish, and nurture. Eichenberg also executed an eccentric collection of knitted wool garments that envelop anthropomorphized objects, such as tables and chairs. All point to a body trying to understand itself in and through the world. But they are also a body in pain, and the image of propagation as suggested in the sealed branch is apparently the wound from which begins Eichenberg's multi-year process of self-identification.

In *Bombay Rubber/Delhi Thoughts* (2000), which one can deduce is produced from artifacts collected in India, Eichenberg creates figurative constructions from out-of-date medical paraphernalia: orange rubber hosing, hot water bottles, and atomizer bulbs, glass labware, bits of ginseng, felt, and fabric. Hands, legs, and body parts figure prominently, as do references to femininity—rubber nipples, a silver garter belt clip. These works are unexpectedly humorous and silly, suggesting a childlike fascination with rather sinister suspicious devices. They are, like the earlier furniture swathed in knitted wool, provocative attempts at making a bodily connection with the alien world that services that body.

Sunen (which is basically untranslatable, although it refers to the German words for both kiss and karma, according to Eichenberg) of 2000 is an intriguing collection of brooches coupled with rear and side view car mirrors. Mirrors show up again in more recent pieces

opposite
Untitled (brooches and object) from the series "Sunen," 2002
car mirror, silver, plastic, mother of pearl
dimensions variable

above
Untitled (brooch), from the series "Weiss," 2005
porcelain, linen
6 x 3 x 2"

EICHENBERG'S IS A WORLD RIPE WITH SMELLS AND HARD WORK, THE UNSPARING CYCLES OF LIFE AND DEATH, THE SIMPLE AND THE NECESSARY.

of Eichenberg's, in which dark ominous figures are produced by scratching through the metallic surface on the back, suggesting a concept of afterimage, doppelganger, or alter ego. In *Sunen*, stacks of fabric are sewn loosely together to create the brooches, some with stitched and pierced surfaces creating drawing-like marks, others covered with bits of shell or what appear to be mangled inexpensive rings. The brooches are reflected in the mirrors, which are partially obstructed by etched or sandblasted hieroglyphics. The double entendre of the title suggests the relativity of truth, the impossibility of knowing, the temporality of perception. One can only guess, and, perhaps, that's the point.

In 2004, Eichenberg produced *Heimat* (Homeland), whose rich pieces recall her bucolic childhood in the German countryside—animal skin and fur, bone and horn, twigs and the timber of farmhouses and tables, desiccated frogs, stitching on the run, mending and making do. It is a world ripe with smells and hard work, the unsparing cycles of life and death, the simple and the necessary. The works in this group, and the particularly German notion expressed in the title, suggest a moving reconciliation with one's past, a resolution, and as such they are deeply affecting. It is not surprising that they were followed by a collection in which the wound has become sanitized and purified: *Weiss* (White, 2005), a cathartic monochrome baptism manifested in all-white works of porcelain and linen gauze and white silver.

Eichenberg's most recent body of work, *Tenement/Timelines* (2007), is a heartfelt response to the early- to mid-twentieth-century artifacts stored in the vaults of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York, which document the rich, bustling immigrant culture that flourished on streets named Delancey and Essex and Orchard at that time. The artifacts bear witness to a ragtag neighborhood of clotheslines and cramped quarters; sweat shops and cottage industries, makeshift lives rife with the pungent aromas of transplanted traditions and reconstituted rites. And, of course, to

a culture of hope mingled with the mourning and loss for those left behind. Eichenberg's voyeuristic interest in these relics is quite a departure from the familial ones she interprets for *Heimat*, which is rooted in a world she knows experientially from childhood, and one can only assume that they hold interest to her process of finding a way to be in the world during her own recent emigration and assimilation. They also represent a conceptually cumbersome object—meaning gleaned from an artifact in order to create another. Here I must confess a nagging bias: as the grandchild of an immigrant who landed at Ellis Island and set up shop as a tailor on the Lower East Side, I am trying desperately to forgive and accept this apparent cultural opportunism. I keep remembering the famous line in Walker Percy's novel *The Moviegoer* when Binx, a 30-year-old white Southern Baptist insurance salesman, says, "Lately I have become acutely aware of Jews. Every time I pass a Jew on the street, a Geiger counter in my head starts rattling away like a machine gun." He continues, "Jews are my first real clue...we share the same exile."[5] Perhaps this romanticized notion of exile is related to the collective German emotional baggage that seeks to come to terms with a painful history that manifested itself on the other side of the Atlantic. As Joseph Beuys himself would have advocated, she looks it in the eye and, without sentimentality or self-pity, courageously allows herself to feel the wound. Can one possibly take issue with that?

Clumps of stacked leather or silver hands, hanging from rings like so many keys, figure prominently in this grouping, as do leather strapping, stitching, delicate leather roses as a milliner might create, lace, carved plastic and coral, and other indicators of the meager piecework livelihood of these immigrants. Almost all the works are intended to be worn in the manner of a chatelaine, large key ring, or tool belt, suggesting a proletarian functionality and a badge of survival. Many of her works are inscribed with registration numbers of some sort—do they refer to the museum's cataloging system, or perhaps the numbers identifying individuals as they came off the crowded boats into the new world? As with all of Eichenberg's works, the table is set with a careful, but seemingly random array of signifiers, suggesting the uncanny way necessity makes strange bedfellows. Gestures, all of them.

Within the tradition of artworks that confront the human condition photography, film, and video have provided—in addition to both an anesthetic escapism and a politically charged populism—access to a new type of raw visual data that is discomfortingly mundane. But between the cracks of these apparent dualities—of romanticism/hyper-realism, fascism/escapism, propagandism/elitism—emerges another methodology in which unembellished data is reassembled and recontextualized into new ways of creating meaning. The theoretical models of both Benjamin and Buck-Morss offer tools with which to pry this new door open, but they cannot fully account for the moral, sexual, and political ambiguity that makes Eichenberg's work so intimidating and fascinating. Her truth is as nuanced as life itself, and she, like a neo-realist stage designer, carefully arranges the props and provides fertile conditions in which meaning, both transparent and opaque, can emerge. Hers is an authentically poetic art, sensually based yet refreshingly devoid of sentimentality, and it reaffirms the power of the aural to exceed linguistic limits. The works speak through their materiality in a coded language that may be indecipherable. You must, ultimately, trust or not trust, give in or not give in, and this is the transcendental challenge that Eichenberg presents. If your intellect is too big or heart too small, they will remain silent forever.

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1 Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* (Cambridge, Mass, no.62, Fall,1992), pp 40-41.
2 Ibid. p.3.
3 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936) *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), p. 224.
4 Ibid, p. 234.
5 Walker Percy, *The Moviegoer* (New York: Knopf, 1961), pp. 88-89.

opposite
Otto (brooch), from the series "Heimat," 2004
silver, buttons, fur, wool, frogs
4 x 6 x 1"

Untitled (necklace), from the series "Tenement/Timelines," 2007
wood, silver, copper, bone, textile
5 x 5 x 2"

above
Untitled (brooch), from the series "Tenement/Timelines," 2007
silver, plastic, bone
7 x 4 x 2"

"SHARI PIERCE: CARDBOARD DEMOCRACY, USA"

JEWELERSWERK GALERIE, WASHINGTON, DC
NOVEMBER 9–30, 2007

by KATE DOBBS ARIAIL

Shari Pierce's "Cardboard Democracy" series all looks like garbage on a string at first glance. At second glance, the stuff still looks like garbage on a string, but you begin to see it as *interesting* recycled material, compiled into theatrical, Rauschenbergian wearable objects. The cognitive dissonance set off by these house paint–saturated cardboard brooches, necklaces, and bracelets, against the exquisite gold and silver body ornaments of a sophisticated Georgetown gallery, is loud enough to make your ears ring—especially when you look at the price list.

Cardboard is ubiquitous and cheap. This doesn't actually make it "democratic," but since it is free to the scavenger like Pierce who liberates it from the recycling dumpster, it is easy to see the thought progression: from free, to freedom, to democracy. Pierce seems to use it in her artwork as a way of allying herself with the workers of the world rather than the bosses, and, along with the discarded house paints, to carry a message about the ugliness of abuse and waste. This amalgam sets itself in virtuous contrast to the preciousness of beautiful rare materials obtained at considerable human and environmental cost.

The value associated with this "jewelry" comes not from its materials—used cardboard, old paints, thrift store chains—but from its driving concepts. That these objects, which started out as a kind of protest, have become part of a short-lived high-fashion cycle is paradoxical. But the real riddle is why anyone who could, *would* plunk down a couple thousand bucks for a mysterious unidentifiable wad hung from a base metal chain and cloaked in an enigmatic skin of paint.

Pierce is well trained. She received her BFA from East Carolina University, where she studied under Robert Ebendorf—and spent much of her time in the painting department. She later studied with Bettina Dittlmann, then with Otto Künzli in Munich, where she began to think of jewelry as symbol of identity, rather than as ornament or luxury. She started to find metaphors with which to express her own identity politics, while using her traditional jewelry design skills to craft objects recognizable as wearables, though not as ornaments.

Some of the pieces in "Cardboard Democracy" are stunningly ugly. Unable to rise above their hideous colors and repellent materials, they remain gobs of garbage tarted up with glossy paint. Others, with more components, clearer forms, and a wider range of textures, are brash and piquant, compelling as both bodywear and objects.

The more elaborate necklaces are the most successful. *Short Grey Wrapped Ball* uses a traditional symmetrical design of a plaque with pendant suspended from a robust chain, with very nice relationships among the parts. But the plaque consists of clustered balls of crumpled paper bound with fine chain, all painted a glossy industrial grey. A plastic filigree button hangs below the plaque like a mocking laugh.

Two necklaces, *White Multi-Pointed Tribal Inspired* and the similarly rich and mobile *Large Black Multi-Chain Hollow Formed Cardboard Tube*, were the most decorative items in the exhibition, and are both very satisfying in their repetitive exuberance. The ferny "teeth" of the white piece make a dense ruff for the neck, while the black necklace hangs low and emphasizes the chest. Both, though heavy, look wonderful on the body, and make aesthetic as well as conceptual statements.

Pierce has also made some clothing pieces in the "Cardboard Democracy" series. In the gallery, the paint-saturated garments held ghostly (if luridly colored) forms, but didn't convey much. However, these garments had been fitted onto models and used in a dramatically lit fashion photo shoot in Vienna, along with the cardboard jewelry. In the photographs, everything looks fabulous. It is as if the materiality of these objects gets in the way of their conceptuality. The ideas seem clearer from a remove, the irony sharper, when you are not considering how that gooey-looking paint would feel on your skin. "Cardboard Democracy," much like political democracy, exists more fully and perfectly in the virtual world.

KATE DOBBS ARIAIL writes on arts and culture from her home in Durham, North Carolina.

from top
Short Grey Wrapped Ball, 2007
cardboard boxes, found housepaint, fake gold and silver chains
9 1/2 x 5 1/2"

White Multi-Pointed Tribal, 2007
cardboard boxes, found housepaint, fake gold and silver chains
11 3/4 x 9"

Large Black Multi-Chain Hollow Formed Cardboard Tube, 2007
cardboard boxes, found housepaint, fake gold and silver chains
25 1/2 x 9 7/8"

Photos: Mason Douglas

from top
Pattern, Black Fragment Series, 1978-79
enamel, copper, silver
1 7/8 x 1 3/4 x 1/2"

Mosaic Scenarios 10, 2005
enamel, copper, gold
1 7/8 x 1 7/8 x 3/16"

Urban Traces 2, 2006
Enamel, copper, gold
1 3/4 x 2 3/8 x 3/16"

Photos: Kevin Sprague

"EDGE OF THE SUBLIME: ENAMELS BY JAMIE BENNETT"

FULLER CRAFT MUSEUM, BROCKTON, MASSACHUSETTS
JANUARY 19–MAY 4, 2008

by PATRICIA HARRIS AND DAVID LYON

Jamie Bennett made his debut on the exhibition scene while still in graduate school in the early 1970s, and he's rarely been out of the public eye since. As befits an artist who re-invigorated the field of enameling and who has passed on his vision to nearly two generations of students, Bennett has been featured in more than 30 solo exhibitions and his jewelry has been included in more than 60 group exhibitions. Yet "Edge of the Sublime," organized and first shown at the Fuller Craft Museum, is the first comprehensive retrospective of his work. Fortunately it will travel to museums around the country into 2010.

Curator Jeannine Falino has assembled a prodigious quantity of Bennett's jewelry (90 pieces, mostly brooches) and has juxtaposed them with his wall installations, paintings, drawings, and work sketches. First and foremost, the resulting exhibition is a dazzling display of Bennett's artistry. But just as important, the inclusion of non-jewelry pieces provides a more complete context for Bennett's technical and compositional innovations, illustrating a seamless evolution of one artist's sensibility.

In some of the earliest work in "Edge of the Sublime," Bennett wrestles with issues of abstraction, breaking down clothing patterns (his mother worked in the fashion industry) into constituent parts in *Shirt Pattern 3, White* (1977) and finally going to full abstraction of the component vectors in *Pattern, Black Fragment* (1978-79). Nearly two decades later, in the late 1990s, he literally reverses the process in the "Jurjani" series of brooches, where abstract pattern gradually emerges as recognizable, almost representational form.

The work in between, of course, is the history of modern enamel jewelry writ large. There are multiple examples of Bennett's break with frontal composition within the frame of a bezel. His mid-1980s "Priori" series went beyond the conceit of enamel as a small painting to demonstrate that enamel functioned just as well as free-form sculpture. The exhibition also has a strong selection of work from Bennett's lush explorations of Islamic culture.

In retrospect, Bennett's embrace of ornament, which grew out of his study of Persian miniatures and the Islamic ornamental tradition, may represent an even more profound artistic turn in his work than his freeing of enamel from the conventions of painting. The "Jurjani" series references the 11th-century linguist who championed the ornamental aspect of calligraphy as a linguistic system. The series synthesizes abstraction and representation through the narrative power of forms—both those depicted within the enamel, and those implied by the shapes and juxtaposition of pieces.

By the time Bennett commenced the "Mosaic Scenarios" series in 2005, he had developed a charged language of symbols and gestures. This visual rhetoric becomes particularly evident in some of the paintings included in "Edge of the Sublime," in which Bennett explores plant forms that recur later in several enamels. Interestingly enough, Bennett's paintings are often more like traditional enamels and mosaics than his jewelry—with the canvases divided into quadrants, or even into a scroll-like string of scenes. The "Mosaic Scenarios" brooches, by contrast, are masterpieces of painting in miniature. They employ exquisite brushwork to render both infinitesimal detail and moody, atmospheric layers of color that create a cloudlike visual space for the dominantly floral forms to inhabit.

Bennett never seems to stand still artistically. The most recent pieces in "Edge of the Sublime," the "Urban Traces" series (2005–06), seem an exhortation to look more closely at the world at hand. Without resorting to precise representation, Bennett suggests the extraordinary form all around—the fragment of a leaf, the clipped edge of a feather, the speckling of pollen that dusts the windshield of a car parked outside on a spring night.

Bennett has always been articulate about his aesthetic intentions and passionate about his creations as objects in their own right—not adornments, not representations, but objects with their own artistic lives. Just as enamel is both painting and jewelry, Bennett's brooches and neckpieces are both objects and essays. They carry a swirling artistry on their skins, a calligraphy of color and form, a tattoo in fused glass. And yet "Urban Traces" comes back full circle to the tradition of enamel as the artist-made jewel encapsulated in a bezel. But what jewels! No gemstone could be so bursting with story.

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"THE ENAMEL EXPERIENCE: INTERNATIONAL BADGE EXHIBITION"

VELVET DA VINCI, SAN FRANCISCO
FEBRUARY 27–MARCH 30, 2008

by JENNIFER CROSS GANS

"We don't need no stinking badges!" is one of the most memorable lines in movie history, and of course it's a flat-out lie. Badges are often the first pieces of adornment we receive as children, whether as a Scout or a club member. They are almost impossible to throw away, sometimes because they are attractive, but always because they are a souvenir of some achievement or someone's past life.

"The Enamel Experience: International Badge Exhibition," is the result of an unusual collaboration between the University of the West of England, which has an Enamel Research Centre, and the Museum der Arbeit in Hamburg. Twenty-three highly regarded artists from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany were invited to create a group of badges inspired by the Museum der Arbeit's collection, which derived from the copious output of Germany's premier badge manufacturer, Carl Wild.

Photographs and samples from the collection, which accompanied the traveling exhibition, showed that Carl Wild (1901-90) was a hard act to follow. The badges were incredibly varied, often intricate, made using the gamut of enameling techniques, and were handmade and hand-finished (usually by women). They were miniature jewels, even though their original purpose has been forgotten.

Most of the 23 exhibitors chose to ignore or at least downplay the main rule of badge-making: to be a symbol of rank or identity at least recognizable to the wearer. One exception was Sarah Perkins, who offered badges for some imaginary societies: Metalsmiths Unlimited, Associated Enamelists, and Jewelers United. Another was the badge of plain fluxed copper disks created by Bettina Dittlmann and Michael Jank, proclaiming "Fair Gold."

Probably the most unforgettable examples combined technique with a powerful political message. Kathleen Browne created two badges commemorating (or decrying) interrogation techniques at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. Elizabeth Turrell, who also curated the show, created simpler pieces inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1999, and the tragic inevitability of human conflict, each in the universally recognizable shape of a cross. Still more poignant was her use of the new transfer technique to create a ghostly, khaki-clad soldier, one of the lost legions of two world wars.

Most of the other artists chose to celebrate a personal event, memory, or passion, resulting in more of an art piece than a recognizable badge. Stephen Bottomley fabricated a pierced hollow form in a lattice design inspired by the work of the Spanish textile designer Mariano Fortuny. Wendy Ramshaw created beautifully enameled circles representing her inspiration of a rainbow around the sun. Marjorie Simon made some simple beach badges enameled in opaque pastels, and travel souvenirs from silver and vintage postcards.

Reverence for nature inspired several artists, notably Linda Darty, who created three gorgeous classic silver and cloisonné brooches. Gretchen Goss produced a series of etched badges in vibrant colors celebrating water, trees, and gardens. Joan MacKarell offered two blocks of richly subdued panels inspired by the bogland of her Irish childhood.

Humor, of course, crept in, notably from the sly trickster Robert Ebendorf, who concocted four multi-media badges on a religious (or anti-religious) theme: *Howling for Jesus, Telling a Story to JC*, and a *Recycled Saints Badge*. His more elaborate *Coat of Arms Badge* was layered with associations—the Vatican, complete with symbols of papal power, an American-inspired flag, and decorated with plastic pearls reminiscent of jewels popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but deliciously faux.

The exhibition had plenty to interest working enamelists. In addition to Darty's masterful cloisonné, noteworthy pieces included Claudia Westhaus's sculptural "badges" in silver and cold enamel, bursting with movement and vitality, and Jessica Turrell's intricately etched white and black plaques, tied to silver frames with linen thread. Uta Feiler riffed on military ribbon with her colorful "badges" made from bezel-set enameled stainless steel mesh. Jane Short showed her versatility both as an enamelist and jeweler, with five pins, one elaborately stenciled, on the theme "Affairs of the Heart."

This show is also a reminder of the difficulty artists face in conveying their intent. When creating a badge it is rare for personal content, however attractively presented, to resonate with the potency of an established symbol.

JENNIFER CROSS GANS is a writer and studio jeweler in San Francisco.

from top
STEPHEN BOTTOMLEY
Badge: STAR, 2007
sterling silver, enamel, acrylic
diameter 2 1/2"

LINDA DARTY
Daisy Badge, 2007
fine silver, enamel, pearls
5 x 3 1/2 x 1/2"

CLAUDIA WESTHAUS
Badge: Save, 2007
silver, cold enamel
1 1/2 x 1"

"SILVERSMITHS TO THE NATION: THOMAS FLETCHER AND SIDNEY GARDINER 1808–1842"

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK, NEW YORK
NOVEMBER 20, 2007–MAY 4, 2008

by ROSANNE RAAB

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's "Silversmiths to the Nation: Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner, 1808–1842," is a seminal exhibition devoted entirely to their work, which ranged from monumental vessels celebrating military and civic heroes to domestic, ecclesiastical, and personal items. Established in Boston in 1808 and relocated to Philadelphia three years later, the firm of Fletcher and Gardiner reflects America's emergence as a commercial, industrial, political, and artistic center in the nineteenth century.

Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner served as a link between colonial workshops, including those established in Boston by John Hull, and Paul Revere, Sr., and the emerging factories and retailers of luxury goods, such as Tiffany & Company and Gorham. Copious business papers, personal correspondence, letter books, and travel journals not only chronicle their professional activities and the world in which they lived, but also provided the organizers, Donald L. Fenimore and Ann K. Wagner, curators at the Winterthur Museum and Country Estate in Delaware, with invaluable primary sources.

Fletcher and Gardiner attained prominence in the early decades of the nineteenth century, winning competitions and commissions for commemoratives in the form of urns, swords, bowls, and cups. Silver forms could be hammered, cast, rolled, or spun into an abundance of neoclassical ornaments, such as satyrs' heads, anthemia, and gods and goddesses representing virtues associated with ancient classical civilizations. Such designs spoke of "inventing tradition," according to English historian Eric Hobsbawn, who associates this practice with a young nation that sought to establish a sense of continuity with the past.

Among the highlights of the exhibition is a pair of majestic vases that were presented to Governor De Witt Clinton upon the completion of the Erie Canal. The urns, from the permanent collection of the Metropolitan, were commissioned in 1824 by "the merchants of Pearl Street" in New York. They formally evoke the celebrated *Warwick Vase*, a 10-foot antique Roman marble that was greatly admired and copied by many artisans. The craftsmanship of this commemorative, with its massive reed handles, is rich in allegorical representation of the arts and sciences. It depicts minutely detailed scenes from along the Erie Canal. Governor Clinton, the motivating force behind this initiative, received the silver urns with great pomp and ceremony when they were presented at the governor's mansion in Albany in 1825. At the same time, the reputation of its makers was greatly enhanced by their public viewing.

Fletcher and Gardiner used a similar form for *The Hull Urn* (1812–13), a commemorative showpiece honoring Isaac Hull, captain of the U.S.S. Constitution. This 30-inch-tall covered urn (soup tureen) prominently displays figures of Time and Fame, and a proud American eagle atop engraved sailing warships heralding Hull's naval victory of the War of 1812, as well as the maker's signature. Private citizens and companies from Philadelphia raised $3,000 for this commission, an expression of conspicuous consumption by those who wished to confer honor on its recipient, and at the same time ritualize their relationship formally and publicly. Mounted near this imposing object in the entrance gallery is a sample Fletcher and Gardiner trade card depicting *The Hull Urn*. It served to promote their talents as artisans and as astute businessmen.

In the 1820s and 1830s, a well-appointed table was a mark of wealth and social status in America. The exhibition includes splendid examples of Fletcher and Gardiner's domestic silver, ranging from restrained Classicism to a more elaborate Rococo revival style. The firm produced a vast array of forks, spoons, and knives, tea and coffee sets, boldly decorated with bands of shell and scroll decoration. Trays, salvers, soup and small sauce tureens, and sauceboats ornamented with grapevine motifs and acanthus leaves augmented their production. Some designs were executed by hand, and others were facilitated by Fletcher and Gardiner's use of new machine technology, which shaped flat sheets of silver with heavy dies.

The exhibition is displayed in three galleries. The most grandiose, a large oval room that houses a cycloramic depiction of the palace and gardens of Versailles, was painted by the American Neoclassicist John Vanderlyn in 1818–19 at his studio on Chambers Street in New York. Fletcher, on his trips abroad to visit silver factories, would have visited Versailles, therefore making this contextual setting most fitting. A group of 35 related drawings, purchased by the Metropolitan in 1953 and shown here for the first time, depict the evolution of Fletcher and Gardiner's silver designs.

from top
THOMAS FLETCHER AND SIDNEY GARDINER
Urn Presented to Isaac Hull, Philadelphia, 1813
silver
height 29 1/2"

THOMAS FLETCHER
Sauceboats and Stands, Philadelphia, 1830–35
silver
height 8 1/2" each
Ruth J. Nutt Collection

THOMAS FLETCHER AND SIDNEY GARDINER
Vase Presented to De Witt Clinton, Philadelphia, 1825
silver
height 23 3/4"
Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

ROSANNE RAAB is an independent curator and collection advisor for twentieth-century craft and design.

"SELECTIVE INTUITION: IMKE JASSMANN AND DOROTHEE ROSEN"

MARY E. BLACK GALLERY, HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA
JANUARY 11–FEBRUARY 17, 2008

by PETER LANYON

Mysterious ancient script, pulled out of amorphous metal. Tiny leaves, poised on delicate twigs of gold and silver. Anatomical imaginings of shapes and tissues, rendered in pendants and brooches. Such were the delights of a recent exhibition by two German-born jewelry designers, Imke Jassman and Dorothee Rosen, celebrating a shared sense of "Selective Intuition."

The two artists met in 2001, while studying jewelry at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax, and discovered a common vision of the jeweler's art. Ever since, they have maintained an intercontinental conversation, inspiring and critiquing each other's work, as it has evolved into highly individualistic expressions.

Dorothee Rosen, who elected to pursue her art in Halifax, is inspired by nature and her life experiences. Witness her series titled "Opening," featuring striking pendants that create the sense that something has broken out and emerged from the boundaries of metal. During a journey on a dark day in Cape Breton's hauntingly beautiful Inverness River Valley, suddenly the sky opened and the sun reflected on the water. Rosen decided to turn this magical moment into jewelry. Piercing small curved lines into sterling silver sheet, she then placed it in a hydraulic press with polyurethane. The pressure stressed the metal until it pushed the piercing, and then was allowed to tear and break. The interior was plated with 22k yellow gold, while the outside was given a bluish-black patina of sky.

This sense of the natural and organic, distilled from life to elegant simplicity, permeates all of Rosen's work. Her "Script" series is another example. The series began on a recent pilgrimage to India, where the Indian lettering all around her drew her eye: it looked like jewelry. Returning home, Rosen pulled the flowing shapes she had seen from melted plastic, in a variety of thicknesses, then cast the result.

Rosen's is a very physical creative process—pulling, twisting, knotting, finally linking—where touch initiates what she calls "a dialogue" with the metal. She works very quickly, in a creative flow, not knowing exactly where the metal will go, as she pushes it, and follows its response. The intuitive in action.

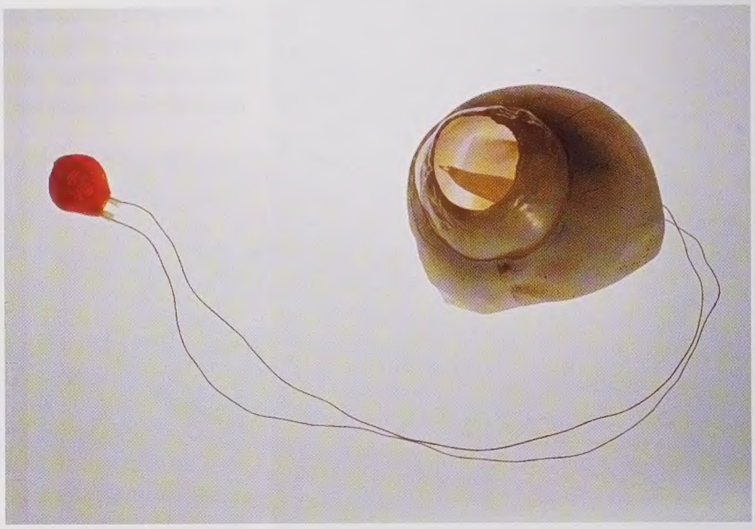
Imke Jassmann, based in Pforzheim, Germany, follows her intuition in other directions, pushing beyond the limitations of wearability to challenging new shapes and forms. Her approach is similarly tactile. She has always been drawn to clay, wax, and other soft materials, letting herself be led and guided by the material. They have led her to translucent corporeal phantasms: beautiful, organic shapes, inspired by the human body. The pieces, in muted colors and mixed textures, look like tissue, organs, ducts and glands, metal delicately manipulated into gossamer volume, bringing the inside out.

Jassmann uses liquid polyvinyl chloride (PVC) as her primary material, which gives the work an almost skin-like quality. The result is a surprising jewelry that involves very little metal.

It is abundantly clear that since their first meeting as students, each artist has found her own individual voice. But what brings them—and the exhibition—together is the common thread of the artist's intuition: a sensitivity to the possibilities of organic life and the properties latent in metal; and an openness to work and evolve with the insistent and active plasticity of the medium.

"Selective Intuition" is more than a celebration of the intuitive, it is a lesson in the mysteries of the creative process: the artist leading, the artist led. And the results, as this exhibition demonstrates, can be both challenging and breathtaking.

PETER LANYON currently resides in Toronto, where he creates with words.



DOROTHEE ROSEN
Script Rings, DATE
18k yellow gold

IMKE JASSMAN
Untitled, 2006
PVC, wax thread
7 x 6 3/4 x 3 1/2"

"FLORENCE RESNIKOFF: SCULPTURAL OBJECTS/JEWELRY"

CLAUDIA CHAPLINE GALLERY, STINSON BEACH, CALIFORNIA
NOVEMBER 18–DECEMBER 16, 2007

by JENNIFER CROSS GANS

Many artists in metal develop a signature style, but Florence Resnikoff is hard to label. While she is best known for her work in electroforming and anodizing refractory metals, her retrospective exhibition shows her versatility and successful experimentation with form, color, and different materials, as well as with some lesser-known metals techniques.

This "metalsmiths' metal artist" was originally trained as a research medical technician, but Resnikoff quickly became passionate about color, beginning with enameling, and started studying jewelry. In the late 1970s she developed an expertise in anodizing refractory metals (which was then a relatively new technology), followed by electroforming and sculpture, topped off by a 15-year stint as head of the metals department at what is now California College of The Arts. Many national and international shows later, Resnikoff was honored in 1985 as a "California Living Treasure," one of 19 Californians whose achievements have helped bridge the gap between art and craft.

Many of Resnikoff's larger works are liturgical commissions, unavailable for gallery viewing, but 23 smaller pieces were included in this show, many of which combine several of the techniques she has made her own. Stylistically, some of the vessels display a classical calm, like the 1999 *Ceremonial Cup* created from electroformed copper, sterling, anodized titanium, and 24k plate, set with gemstones. Another is her *Sun Disc* container from 2003, which glows with the colors of the sun and evening sky. Other works writhe and pulse with energy, like *XYZ*, a sculptural container combining pewter, copper, glass, and electroformed branches of curly willow. A number of pieces are wonderfully tactile, thanks to the rough or furry texture of the electroforming.

Resnikoff's jewelry is a mixed bag of styles and materials. Several of the necklaces combine interesting shapes and gorgeously colored refractory metals; for example, her *Ripple Pendant*, in anodized titanium and niobium, set with a moonstone, and *Swirl Necklace* in the same metals, forged to create a flowing sculptural line. At the same time, Resnikoff is not afraid to use much humbler materials, such as pewter and copper.

At first glance, some of Resnikoff's jewelry tends to look flat, or like high-class street art, but on close inspection has a finely developed sense of color, use of gemstones, and choice of unusual materials, including antique beads, glass, and acrylic. Other pieces show a strong sculptural influence, occasionally organic, but more often with angular and aggressive wire shapes and dangles, suggesting vitality and movement.

Many of her works contain tiny surprises. *A Serpentine Necklace*, cast from snakeskin, then electroformed, with touches of *keum-boo* (a Korean technique for applying 24k gold to silver) and a rutilated quartz cone, has a ruffle at one end, a happy accident (according to the artist) that adds to its appeal. Other pieces are slightly off center, with the clasp at one side. A pair of earrings in twisted palladium sheet illustrates yet another of the artist's pioneering techniques; for 18 years she has experimented with this metal, which is still underused and underappreciated by studio artists.

The exhibition posits Resnikoff's work as designed to showcase color, form, and materials that appeal to a sophisticated and knowledgeable public, rather than concerned with avant-garde design, or social, political, or emotional messages. However, flashes of humor break in. A simple but elegant creamer, obligingly tilted towards the pourer, has a small black and white cow skewered from behind on the handle. A recent 39 inch-tall twiggy sculpture has a small frog reclining on a black granite base.

While Resnikoff has stopped formal teaching, her work has lessons for every studio artist: Keep experimenting with new techniques and materials, then learn how to combine them. And enjoy the challenge.

JENNIFER CROSS GANS is a writer and studio jeweler in San Francisco.

from top
Ceremonial Cup, 1999
electroformed copper, fabricated sterling silver, anodyzed titanium, 24k gold plate, jade, carnelian, moonstone
8 1/2 x 4 1/2"

Sun Disc (container), 2003
electroformed copper, anodyzed titanium and niobium, photo patterned top, sterling silver, 24k gold leaf
7 1/2 x 3 5/8"

Serpentine Necklace, 2001
electroformed copper, fine and sterling silver, 24k gold, *keum boo*, rutilated quartz
3 1/4 x 5 "

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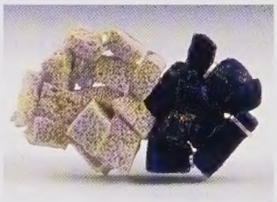
by DANA SINGER



METALSMITH UNDERGOES MAJOR RELAUNCH IN JANUARY 2009

Metalsmith, SNAG's quarterly publication, will relaunch in January 2009, and unveil the first significant redesign of the magazine in more than a decade. Designed by the renowned Luke Hayman, of the Pentagram design firm in New York City, the first issue of *Metalsmith* in 2009 will feature entirely new layouts, typography, and photography. Thank you to Susan Cummins and the Rotasa Foundation for helping to underwrite this relaunch.

SNAG CONFERENCE 2009: PHILADELPHIA

SNAG's next conference, *REVOLUTION*, will be held in Philadelphia from May 20 to 23, 2009. Co-chaired by artists Douglas Bucci and Vickie Sedman, the conference is also supported locally by Tyler School of Art, University of the Arts, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Keynote speaker Stanley Lechtzin heads a list of august speakers, which includes sculptor Albert Paley, the Barcelona co-founder of Klimt02, Leo Caballero, and the ever-provocative art and social critic Camille Paglia. Once again Rio Grande is the corporate sponsor of the SNAG conference.

HEIKKI SEPPÄ PRESENTED WITH SNAG LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Last March, during the SNAG conference in Savannah, Heikki Seppä became the most recent award recipient for a lifetime of exceptional service and achievement in the jewelry and metalsmithing field. Instrumental in the early development of SNAG, Seppa introduced reticulation as a process, devised the spiculum, and pioneered a new vocabulary of jewelry and metalworking processes. His seminal book, *Form Emphasis for Metalsmiths*, was a groundbreaking textbook that remains in print and in use. The award is an elegant sterling silver vessel created by SNAG member Cynthia Eid.

SNAG EDUCATIONAL ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

The Educational Endowment Scholarships are SNAG's highest awards offered to college students. This year scholarships were awarded to graduate students Eun Yeong Jeong, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; Soyeon Kim, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; and Robert Longyear, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville. An Honorable Mention was awarded to Gemma Draper, Cranbrook Academy of Art.

SNAG WELCOMES NEW PRESIDENT-ELECT AND BOARD MEMBERS

In March, Harlan Butt (enamellist and educator, University of North Texas) became SNAG's President-Elect. Nanz Aalund (studio jeweler) and Anne Mondro (educator, University of Michigan) were elected by the membership, and Marlene Richey (marketing specialist and author) was appointed by the board. Sandra Zilker graciously extended her board term for an additional two years. SNAG sincerely thanks the outgoing Past President Sam Shaw and board member Kiwon Wang for their years of service.

DANA SINGER is executive director of SNAG.

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top left
Cover prototype for the redesigned *Metalsmith*, to launch in January 2009

Logo for SNAG's Philadelphia conference "Revolution"

Works by SNAG's Educational Endowment Scholarship recipients:
clockwise
ROBERT LONGYEAR
Flat-line Fetish 03, 2007
sterling silver, copper
3 1/2 x 2 1/2 x 2 1/2"

EUN YEONG JUNG
Segmented Life (brooch), 2007
loofa, wool, sterling silver, plastic, stainless steel
4 1/4 x 2 1/2 x 1 1/2"

SOYEON KIM
Brooch 01, 2008
porcelain, enamel, gold luster, sterling silver, stainless steel
3 1/4 x 2 x 1/2"

clockwise
SNAG's President-Elect Harlan Butt, and newly elected board members Nanz Aalund, Marlene Richey, and Anne Mondro

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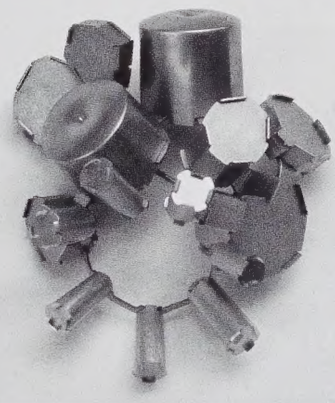

Simon Cottrell
Brooch: Tight cluster bang 2006
Monel, green gold,
stainless steel

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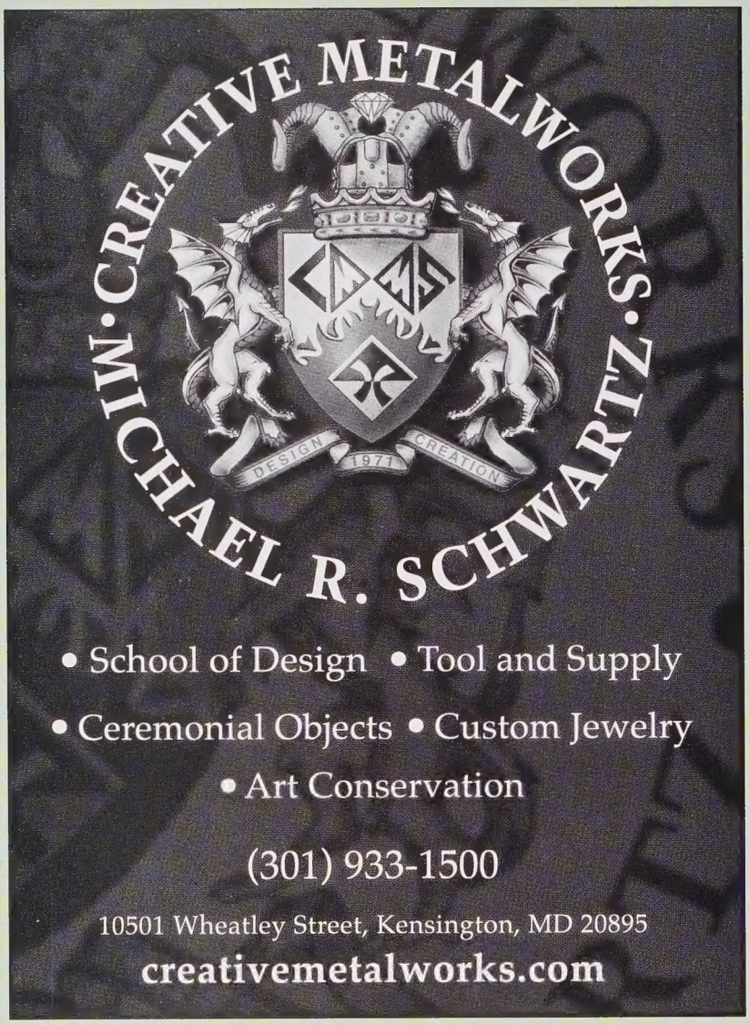

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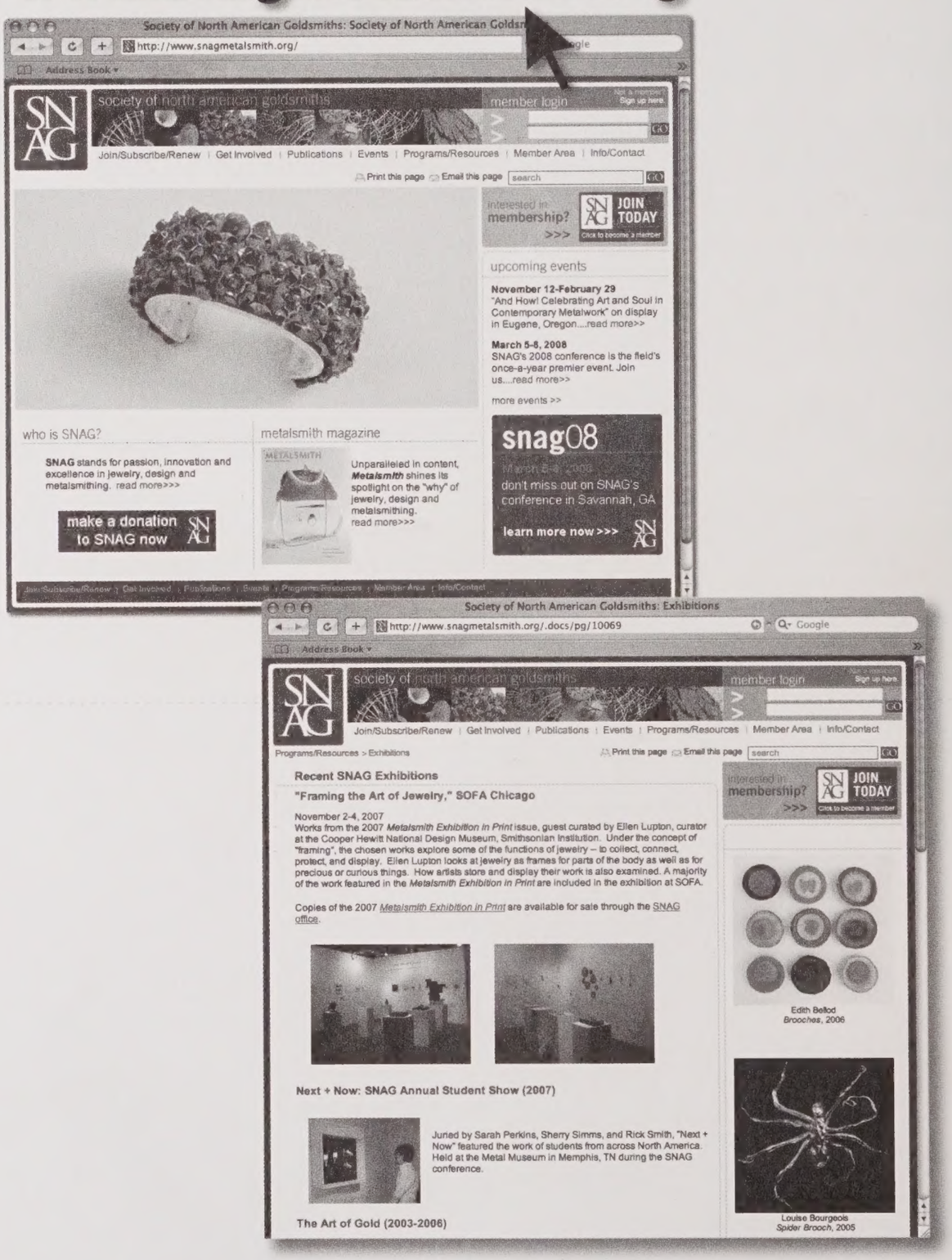
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Recent SNAG Exhibitions
"Framing the Art of Jewelry," SOFA Chicago
November 2-4, 2007
Works from the 2007 Metalsmith Exhibition in Print issue, guest curated by Ellen Lupton, curator at the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution. Under the concept of "framing", the chosen works explore some of the functions of jewelry – to collect, connect, protect, and display. Ellen Lupton looks at jewelry as frames for parts of the body as well as for precious or curious things. How artists store and display their work is also examined. A majority of the work featured in the Metalsmith Exhibition in Print are included in the exhibition at SOFA.
Copies of the 2007 Metalsmith Exhibition in Print are available for sale through the SNAG office.
Edith Bellod
Brooches, 2006
Next + Now: SNAG Annual Student Show (2007)
Juried by Sarah Perkins, Sherry Simms, and Rick Smith, "Next + Now" featured the work of students from across North America. Held at the Metal Museum in Memphis, TN during the SNAG conference.
The Art of Gold (2003-2006)
Louise Bourgeois
Spider Brooch, 2005

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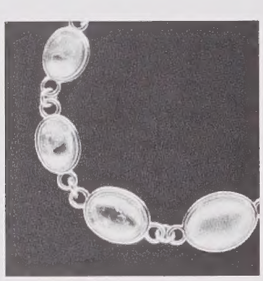

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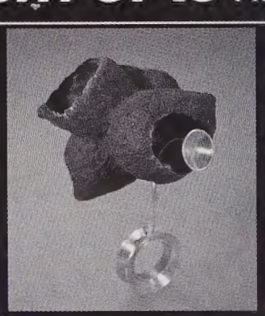

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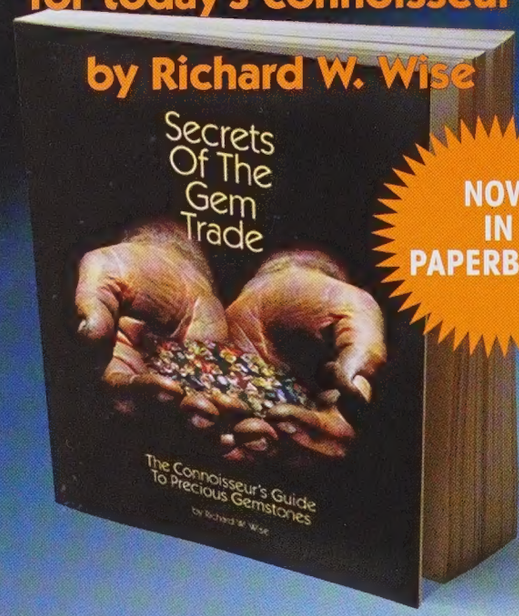

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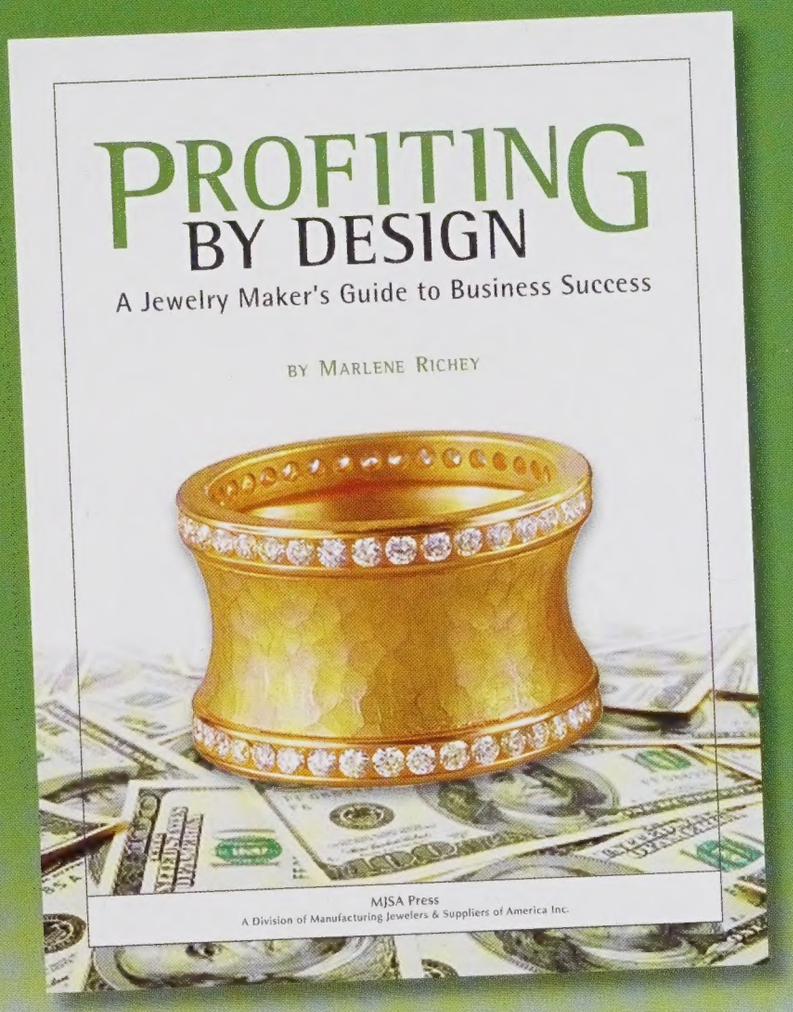
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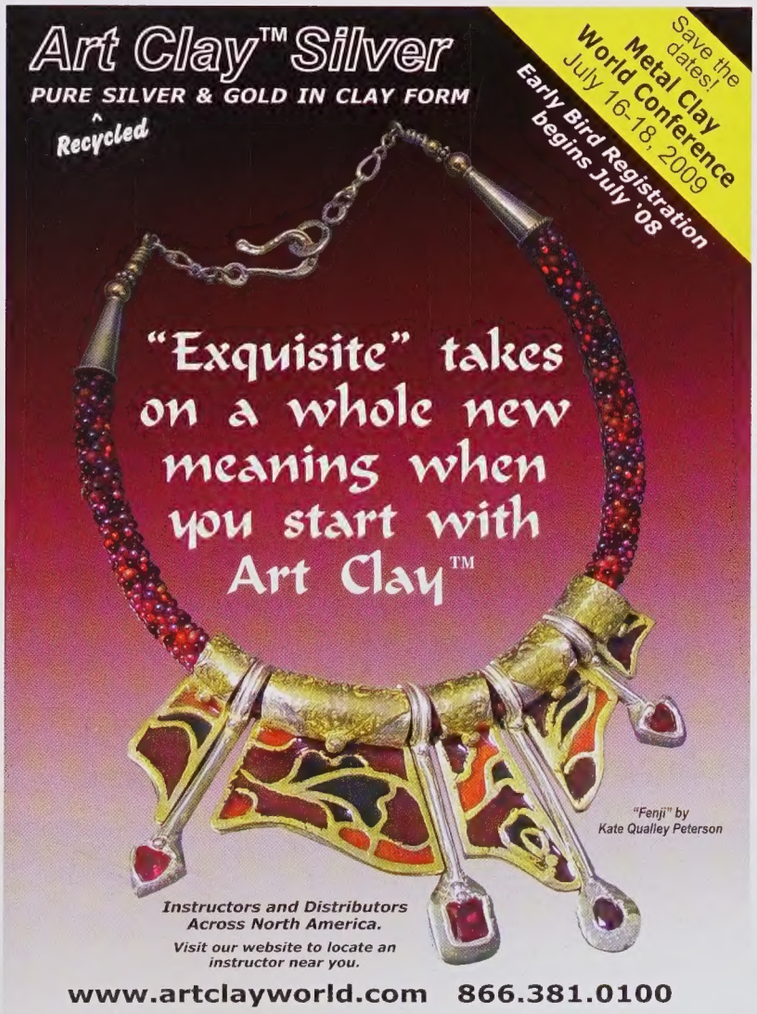
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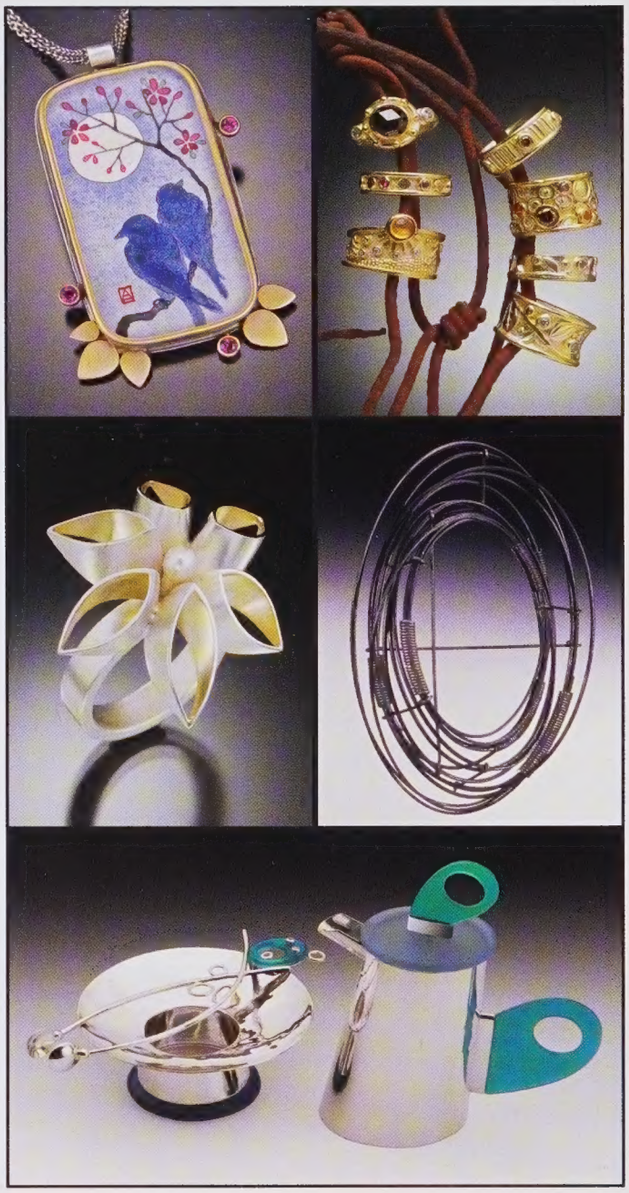

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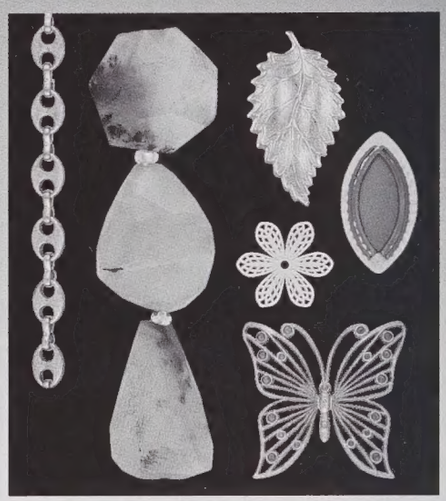

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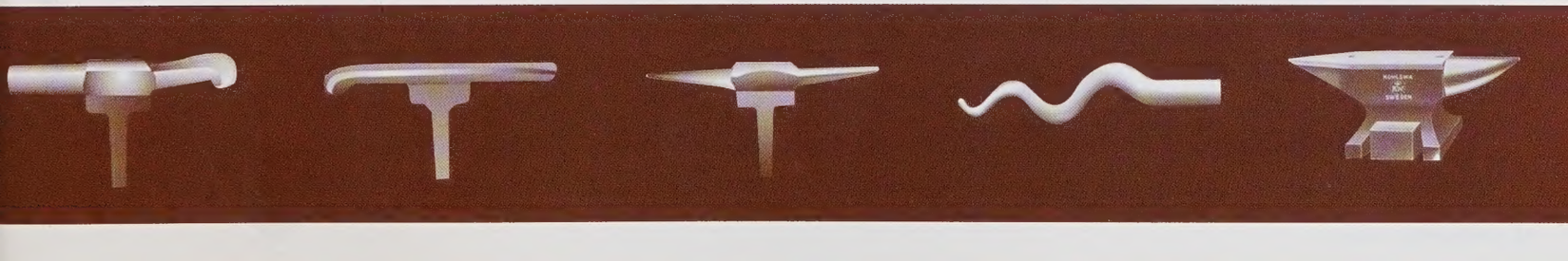

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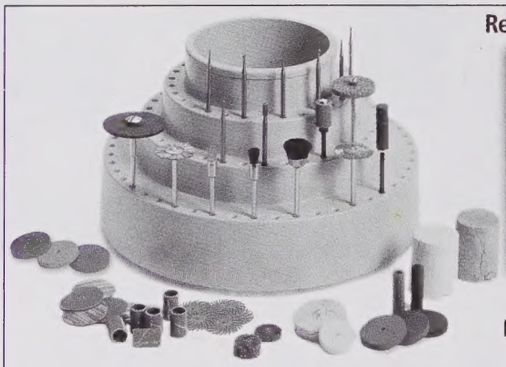

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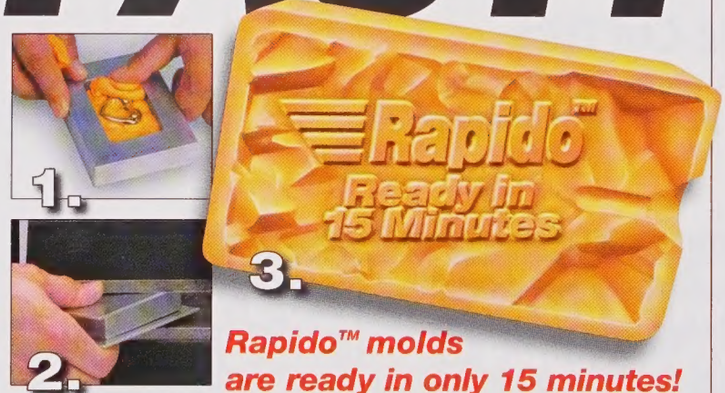

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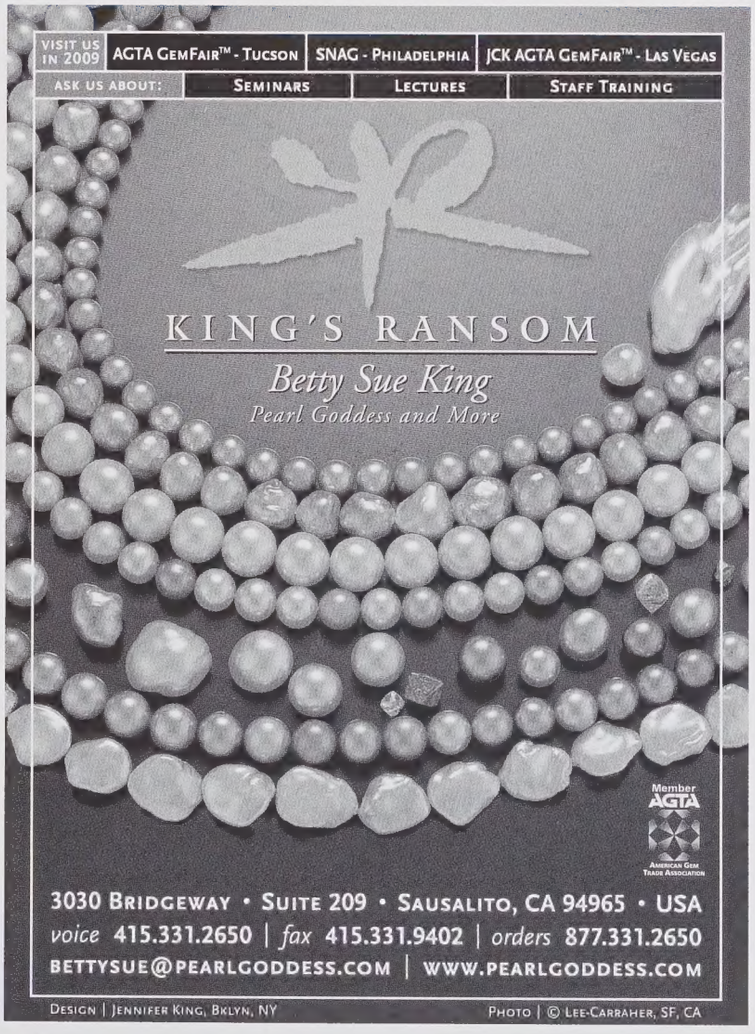
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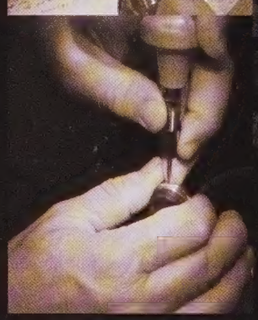

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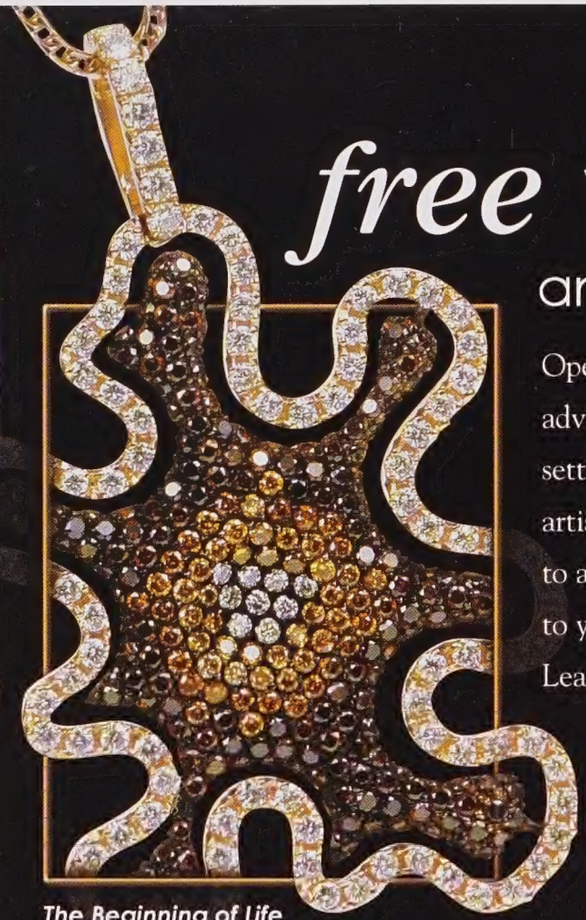

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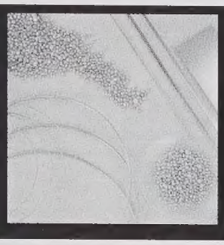

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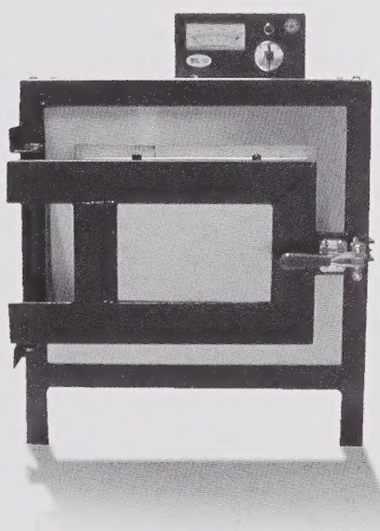

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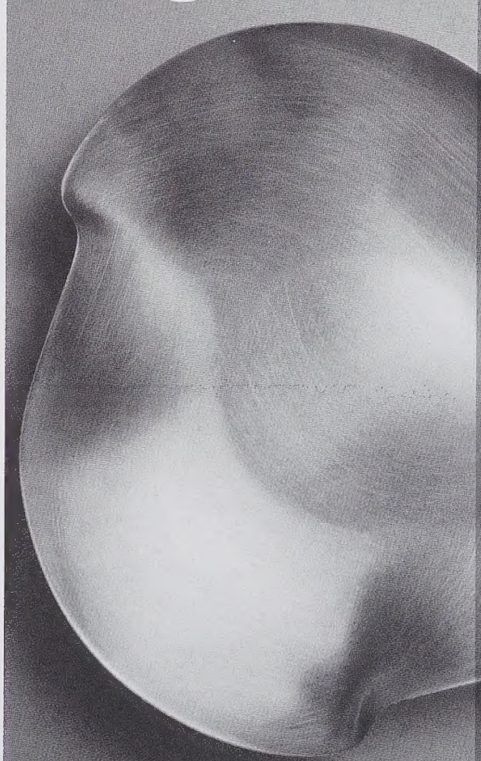

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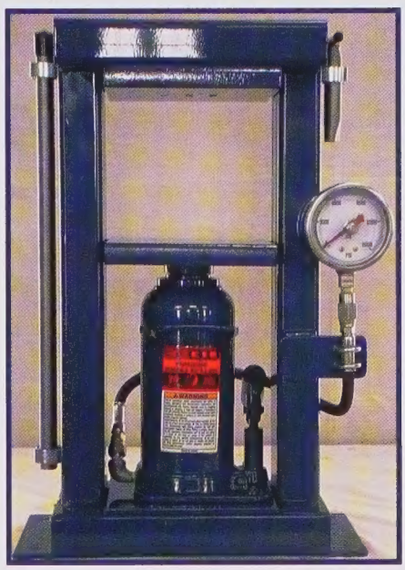

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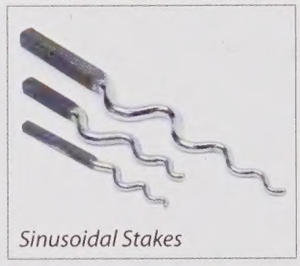

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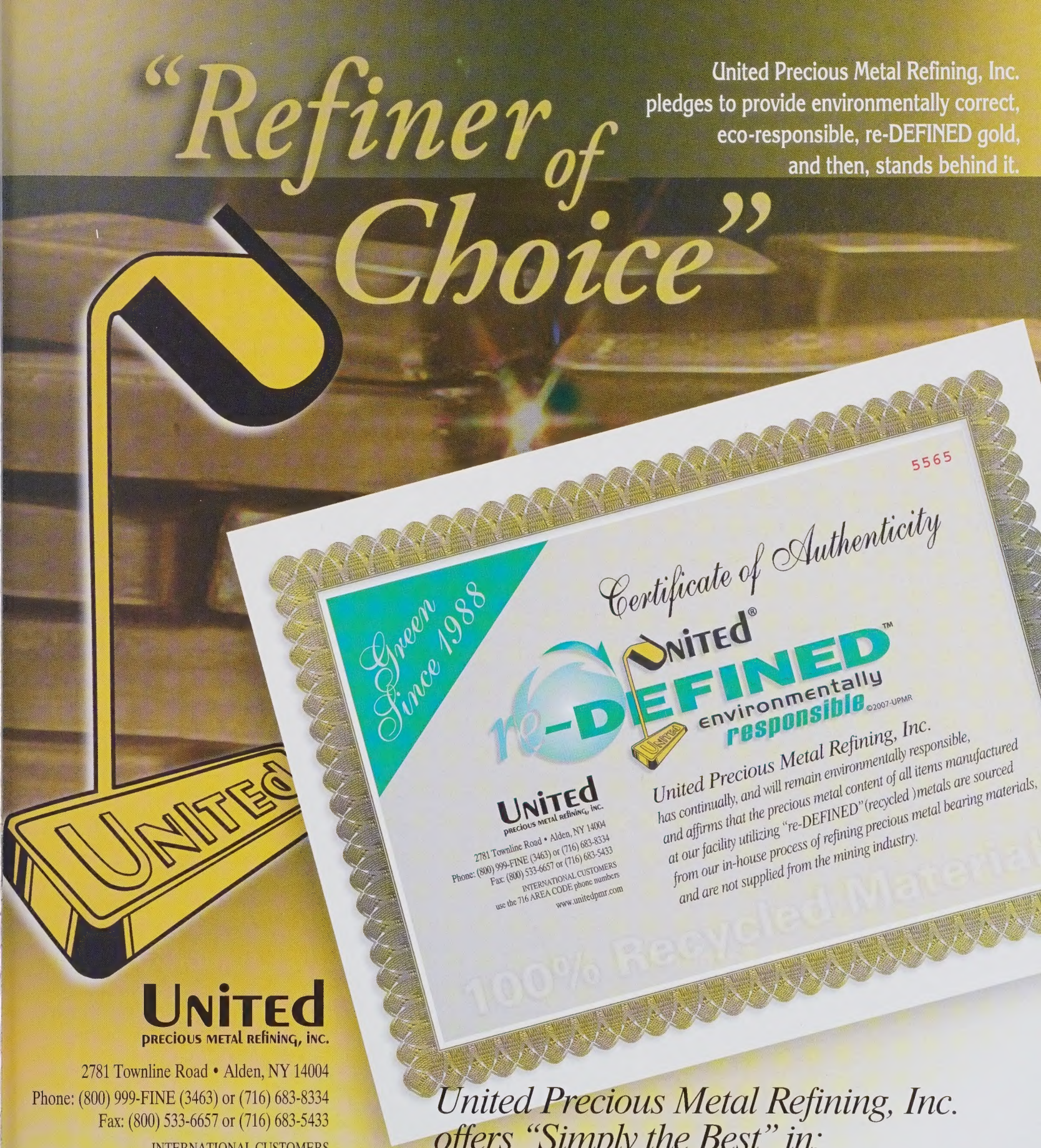
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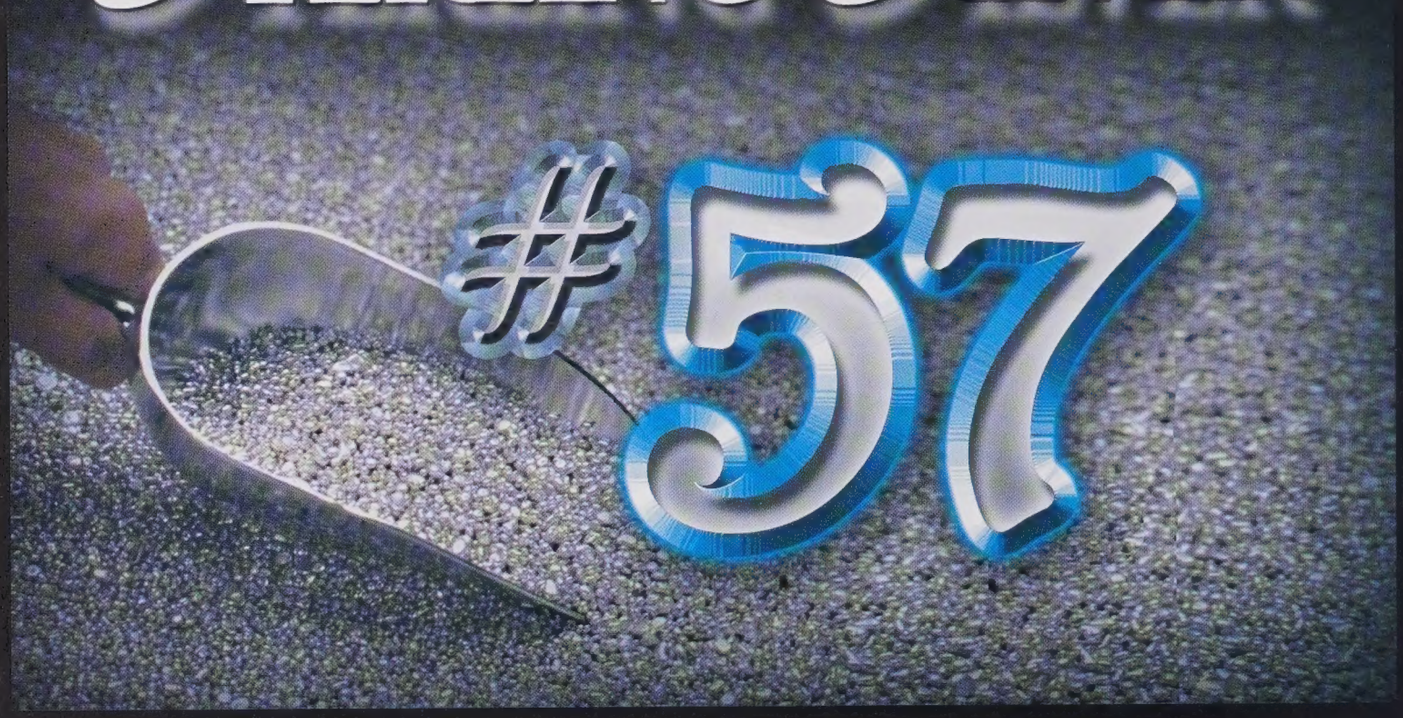

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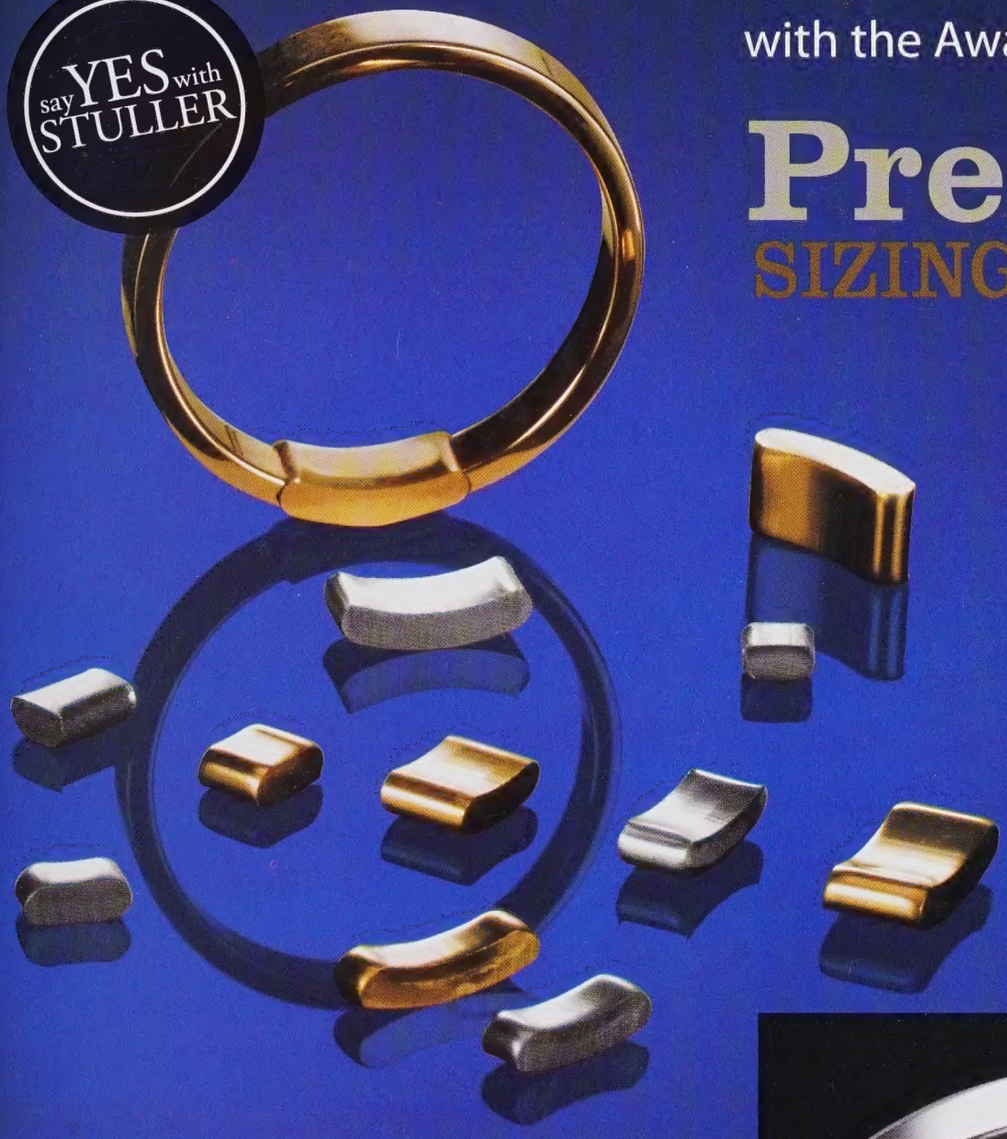

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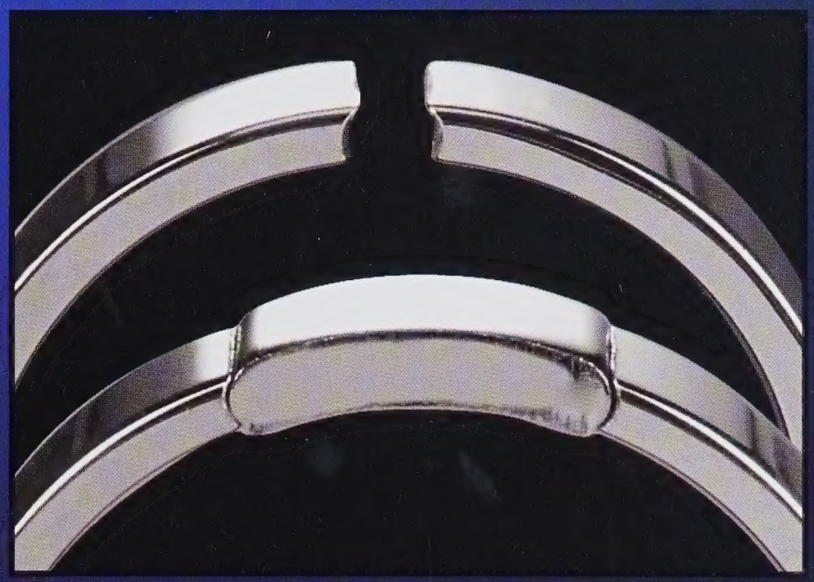

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